

Walter W. Hölbling, Klaus Rieser (Eds.)

What is American?

This One



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edited by

Astrid M. Fellner
(University of Vienna)

Klaus Rieser
(University of Graz)

Hanna Wallinger
(University of Salzburg)

Volume 3

LIT

Walter W. Hölbling, Klaus Rieser (Eds.)

WHAT IS AMERICAN?

New Identities in U.S. Culture

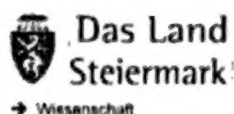
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LIT

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Krotenthallergasse. 10 A-1080 Wien
Tel. +43 (0) 1 / 409 56 61 Fax +43 (0) 1 / 409 56 97
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Dedication

This collection of essays is dedicated to Arno Heller on the occasion of his 65th birthday by friends and colleagues who have contributed original articles on the theme of new identities in U. S. culture. Arno Heller's own research has frequently investigated the issues of what constitutes 'Americanness' and what characterizes an 'American identity', and thus the contributions in this volume can be understood as a continuation of the critical dialogue on topics like initiation, utopian/dystopian and regional identities, the (re)construction of identities in literature and film, and the dynamic process of regenerating and re-inventing new American selves.

The Editors

Table of Contents

Dedication	5
<i>Walter Hölbling and Klaus Rieser</i>	
Introduction	9
1. New Concepts and Reconsiderations	
<i>Gudrun Grabher</i>	
An Unheard (of) Transcendentalist? Charles Ives and America's Musical Identity	13
<i>Louis Kern</i>	
'Unveiling the Secret Arcanum of Affectional Alchemy' and the 'Mysteries of Eulis': Paschal Beverly Randolph, African American Sex Magician, and Sex Radicalism in Late-Victorian America	35
<i>Paul Lauter</i>	
Little White Sheep, or How I Learned to Dress Blue	65
<i>Carl D. Malmgren</i>	
The Great Fitzgerald: <i>Gatsby</i> Revisited	93
<i>Theodore Schatzki</i>	
Identities in Practice	107
2. Migration and Multiple Identities	
<i>Sonja Bahn-Coblans</i>	
Crossing the Atlantic for the Screen	123
<i>Walter Hölbling and Justine Tally</i>	
The Nature of Hybrid Identity in Barbara Kingsolver's <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>	153
<i>Brigitte Scheer-Schäzler</i>	
East Comes West: America's New Immigrants – New Lives and New Texts	173
<i>Waldemar Zacharasiewicz</i>	
A Separate Identity Asserted: Agrarian Affinities With European Culture	191

3. Individuation and Privatized Identity Construction

Robert Fisher

Privatizing Identity in the Global City 211

Peter Freese

Coming of Age in the Shadow of the Vietnam War:
Sam Hughes' Quest in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country* 229

James Thompson

John Haines: The Poet in "Alaska" 263

Hanna Wallinger

Summer in the Air: Emma Dunham Kelley's
Four Girls at Cottage City and Dorothy West's *The Wedding* 279

4. (Re-)Inventions and Virtual Identities

Elisabeth Kraus

Engineered Identities in Science Fiction 297

Roberta Maierhofer

The Old Woman as the Prototypical American –
An Anocritical Approach to Gender, Age, and Identity 319

Bernd Ostendorf

Immediate Experience vs. Un-American Ideologies from
Warshow to Hitchens 337

Klaus Rieser and Susanne Rieser

From Model Minority to Model Masculinity:
The Globalization of the CaucAsian 355

Contributors 373

Selective Bibliography of Arno Heller's Research 381

Introduction

This book traces major areas of re-conceptualizations and inventions in U. S. identities. The anti-essentialist notions which today prevail within literary, media, and cultural studies maintain that identity is a social construction which is constituted in the mold of subject positions which are pre-shaped by language and cultural codes, and realized through social practice.

Identity (and its intellectual cousin, subjectivity) is a central concept in recent research, particularly in cultural studies approaches.¹ It has the advantage of being both an individual phenomenon but also profoundly social, centering diverse issues (since a stable identity demands integration of heterogeneity into the self) as well as connecting to diverse social groupings such as ethnicity, class, gender, race, sexuality. Moreover, identity is one of the central cultural narratives of the U. S. which contains pre-established sequential patterns (e. g. developmental or conversion stories) on which both dominant and resistant discourses can draw.

The aim of the present volume is to honor the topic's diversity, but also to concentrate on one central aspect, that of newness. It is a particular American phenomenon to continually bring forth new or reformed identities, or the reinterpretation of earlier ones: From rags to riches, immigrants, migrants, venturing into the territory, going west, individuation, to move from dreaming to doing, etc. Within the volume, issues of reformulations, of multiplicity, of reinvention and of social constraining, as well as productive forces will be addressed in four thematic categories:

The first category comprises articles which trace or suggest **new concepts and reconsiderations**. Gudrun Grabher presents the often neglected area of musical identity hidden behind the prevalence of texts and the visual realm, connecting music and the literary movement of transcendentalism. Louis Kern traces the radical writings of a Victorian African American on orgasm and reproduction, re-appreciating one of the earliest theoreticians of a pleasure-based sexuality. Paul Lauter traces his own identity formation in relation to Yale while at the same time looking back at modernism through the lens of

multiculturalism, setting off the theory of T. S. Eliot against writings by Sterling Brown. Carl D. Malmgren reconsiders the figure of Gatsby, claiming a shift of the attribute of greatness from Gatsby via Carraway to Fitzgerald, analyzing the ambiguity of identities. In a sophisticated argument, Theodore Schatzki discusses the establishment of identity through social processes and practices, rather than through abstracts concepts of uniqueness and individualism. These articles also implicitly set different theories and paradigms into contrast, resulting in some proposals for reconsideration.

The essays grouped in the second section deal with the perennial source for newness in American identities, ethnicity and **migration**, and the resultant **multiple and shifting identities**. Sonja Bahn looks at European and American contacts in the movie world, from European immigrants who became filmmakers to American directors who worked in Europe, and how they assisted and resisted mainstream ideas of American identity. Walter W. Hölbling and Justine Tally discuss postcolonial perspectives as a new conception of the old ethnic paradigm and the growing attention on Africa, exploring the usefulness of Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" in the reading of Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*. Brigitte Scheer analyzes Asian immigration and texts, with a particular emphasis on the author Mukherjee, and their impact on what Geok-lin Lim calls "an intraethnic, interethnic new world of interlayered cultures" in the U.S. Finally, Waldemar Zacharasiewicz takes a look at the relevance of European societal models for Southern Agrarians and analyzes areas of consensus and difference in the works of prominent Fugitives and Agrarians. Obviously, these authors have chosen different groups and different issues, but together they develop a strong argument for the importance of social contacts and relations in the formation and formulation of identities. The articles thus trace the issues of struggle and strife, but also of cooperation, solidarity, and group cohesion.

Different from the previous section, the articles collected in the third group focus on the issue of **individuation and identity construction**, to a large part in the arena of individualism. Robert Fisher discusses global processes of privatization which, as he demonstrates in his exemplary analysis of developments in the city of Houston,

Texas, even lead to a privatized identity. Peter Freese takes a fresh look at an initiation story whose protagonist is on an individual quest and analyses a female perspective on the effects of the Vietnam War. James Thompson traces the construction of an identity of loneliness, in the example of an Alaskan poet who creates an image of the self as independent agent in a post-individualistic age. Hanna Wallinger looks at issues of individuation for a group of young black women in a late 19th century novel and discusses the (ir)relevance of race in this constellation. These contributions primarily deal with the individual, the one set apart from groups, marginalized or excluded, but also with the conscious choice of loneliness. They also discuss the implied counterpoint: the need for groups, the prevalence of mass living, or the political expediency of social contact.

The essays in the last section focus on **transformative or inventive aspects** of identity construction and maintenance. Elisabeth Kraus analyzes virtual identities under the aspect of artificial human enhancement and construction, critically assessing the contribution of Science Fiction writers Jablokov, Egan, and Kress to these issues. Roberta Maierhofer analytically combines the issues of aging and gender in aging identity, pointing out how the old woman can be seen as the most useful metaphor for American identity. Berndt Ostendorf critically examines the phenomenon of left-to-conservative conversions in the American public sphere, taking as starting points Robert Warshow and Christopher Hitchens and their respective intellectual environments. Klaus and Susanne Rieser analyze the transformation of Asian masculinity in the course of its export to Hollywood and the resulting shifts in gender and racial paradigms. The articles in this section, while again diverse, all focus on transformation processes and the flexibility of human identity.

In their entirety, the essays collected in this volume present a cross-section of research on - and beyond - U.S. identities: Written by European as well as U. S. scholars, ranging from the 19th century to the foreseeable and utopian future, from mainstream canonized figures to minority artists and transgender performers, from a critique of individualism to a celebration of loneliness. The diversity of the articles represents itself an (American) reality of the multiple status of identi-

ties, be it under the auspices of identity politics and multiculturalism, or under the proliferation of theories and theoretical paradigms. Nonetheless, all contributions focus on a common field, that of new identities, new concepts and re-conceptualizations, be it within a represented identity, within representation, or within the analytical, meta-textual approach. We therefore continuously encounter the new that stems from contrast (young vs. old, traditional vs. new, mainstream vs. margin, mass vs. solitude, privatization vs. social needs), but also witness cooperation, social relations, and co-construction of identities - groups of friends, philosophical groups and traditions, ethnicity, canons, and solidarity. Thus, rather than claiming any final definitions of 'What is American?', this volume offers a representative contemporary discussion of the dynamic processes that continue to shape and change American identities.

Walter W. Hölbling

Klaus Rieser

¹ A particularly good starting point for this vast field is Paul du Gay et al. Eds. *The Identity Reader*. London: Sage, 2000.

An Unheard (of) Transcendentalist? Charles Ives and America's Musical Identity

Gudrun M. Grabher

The "American identity" in terms of music is generally reduced to Blues, Jazz, and pop music. The fact that the US has also produced some great classical composers is often neglected or completely ignored. Charles Ives is certainly one of the first of those who deserve attention. "[He] was probably one of the most psycho-intellectually brilliant, imaginative and flexible Americans to ever 'walk the land of freedom.' A graduate of Yale, he became a multi-millionaire in the American insurance business, introducing brilliant innovations within that industry" ("Brief Biographical Sketch" in Ives). Ives did not only contribute, as a composer, to the development of a truly American music, he also outlined a "philosophy of music" that supported the search for the American-ness of American culture, an American identity as propagated by the American Transcendentalists. Ives's grandparents had been personally acquainted with Emerson, and Charles Ives found himself deeply inspired by the ideas and principles of this New England movement. This influence found its expression in both music and prose (cf. Goudie 310). It is most obviously reflected in his Second Piano Sonata - as "fiercely difficult to play" as the First (Hitchcock 1977, 5) - which consists of the four movements Emerson, Hawthorne, The Alcotts, and Thoreau (and a Waltz Rondo). Moreover, Ives reflected theoretically on the Transcendentalists in his aesthetic writing, *Essays Before a Sonata*. He also composed a song based on an Emersonian text, "Duty," and one called "Thoreau." At an early age, Ives adopted Emerson as his mentor and produced his music self-confidently, ignoring popular tastes and fashions. Ives was unafraid to disregard accepted and respected forms and styles; he even felt obliged to do so (cf. Marshall 47). "Ives was the crystallization of Emersonian self-reliance, artistically and personally; he responded to the call for freedom from European artistic models and pushed American art ahead" (Rosa 436). Embracing dissonances and quotations, polytonality and abruptness, he dared to shock his audience.

Ives's compositions were an assault on most ears. At some level, they must have confounded the composer himself. An explanation was required, and Ives provided it. Turning to the only mentors he knew, American figures (chiefly Emerson), he declared that the music was an organic expression of the American spirit. Its structure and texture were nationalistic in character. It sprang not from his own sophisticated and forward-looking perceptions but from America herself. Whether listeners liked it or not [...], the music was there for America's improvement. (Hunnicut 191f.)

This paper will be divided into three parts. After a survey of the main aims and aspects of American Transcendentalism it will investigate the development of American music from the beginnings to the nineteenth century, starting with the influences, especially European, from outside as well as the so-called "vernacular" traditions in US-American culture, and then pursuing the Americans' striving for their own "American" music. The third part will focus on Charles Ives in the context of the history of American music and of American Transcendentalism. It will be argued and demonstrated how this influential New England school of thinking did not only trigger off the search for an American literary identity but also effected the beginnings of the development towards an American musical identity. Charles Ives will be introduced as one of the first composers attempting to make the American identity "played," sung, and heard. Charles Ives's placement within the context of nineteenth-century American culture will, of course, not take place from a musicological point of view. Rather, his aesthetic reflections on the meaning and purpose of music, American music, will be the focus of discussion. Neither his writings nor his music will be analyzed in detail. The aim will be to portray him as a Transcendentalist.

I. American Transcendentalism

In quality of style, and particularly in depth of philosophic insight, American literature has not yet surpassed the collective achievement of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. Having freed itself in these writers from its earlier tendencies either blindly to imitate or blindly to reject European models, American literature here

for the first time sloughed off provincialism, and, by being itself - by saying only what it wanted to say and as it wanted to say it - attained, paradoxically, the rank and quality of world literature [...]. (David Bowers in Barbour 9)

In his introduction to his 1973 anthology of criticism on American Transcendentalism, Brian M. Barbour writes: "If the three main themes of Transcendentalism were, as Perry Miller said, a search for faith, a reaction against Unitarianism, and a revulsion against commercialism, we have not yet superseded our need for the first [...]" (Barbour 1). The connotation of "faith" in Perry Miller's sense, of course, is religious. However, for the Transcendentalists "faith" in themselves, in their own independent spirit, culture, and identity, was as much at stake as was the religious kind. It is on this primary theme of American Transcendentalism - faith of the Americans in their own self and their capacities - that the further discussion of Ives in this context will concentrate.

In the first place, American Transcendentalism is a phenomenon hard to grasp as a unified consistent movement or theory of thinking. Blurring all clear-cut distinctions between theology and philosophy, it also embraces political, sociological, literary, and even utopian conceptions. As a philosophical movement, it did not only adopt its name from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant but also some basic notions of his Idealism, though "greatly modified," as Frederick Ives Carpenter adequately remarks (Carpenter 24). The most astonishing aspect about this modified adoption of Kant's Transcendental Philosophy is certainly the fact that the German philosopher's distinction between *transzendental* and *transzendent* totally escaped Emerson. He never seems to have come across the meaning of Kant's *transzendental*. Instead, he exploited merely the etymological meaning of the word transcendental, going beyond, which thus comes closer to the meaning of Kant's notion of *transzendent*. Besides Kant, the philosophies of Plato and Plotin as well as Far Eastern ones were harbored and accommodated by these "new" Transcendentalists. Charles Ives, the musical Transcendentalist, went beyond and surpassed all obstacles on the way to his defining American music. The belief in the power of one's intuitive insight into reality, the true nature of things, was at the basis of this

heterogeneous melting-pot of influences and inspirations. Thus, the word "knowledge" acquired a new and deeper meaning:

"There is knowing and knowing. The knowledge which is a mere accumulation of data will tend to support the *tabula rasa* theories of the psychological sensationalists and make man the sport of matter. But the knowledge which seems to deliver itself as unharassed intuition, which seems to be the result of a generous impressionability and an out-reaching sense of spiritual qualities shared by perceiver and perceived, this knowledge will justify the Transcendentalists in their assertions" (Tanner 55).

Emerson's conviction that every human being has direct, immediate access to an understanding of the world of all beings as well as of the all-encompassing Being, God, whom he preferred to call the "Over-Soul" (cf. Miller 63), threw an essential bridge across the separate spheres of philosophy and theology. Moreover, this philosophical idealism was also combined with a new religious outlook on their Puritan past, emphasizing their notion of piety rather than their dogmas or moralism (cf. Carpenter 27). In his introduction to his *Essays Before a Sonata*, Charles Ives speaks elaborately about intuitions and introspective sensations. Propagating individualism and non-conformism, the school naturally had an effect on social institutions as well. "All agree that the emancipation from the past and the exploitation of the new democratic impulse - the discovery and elevation of the common man - were the keys to the energy released" (Barbour 2). Charles Ives engaged himself actively with political issues and was convinced that music could contribute to the solution of social dilemmas and political problems. But while some critics recognize the Transcendentalists' main concern in a philosophical reorientation towards the fundamental issues of the essence of man's existence and destiny, others see their striving for a new attitude towards nature at the center of interest, with Thoreau's *Walden* representing the manifestation of this new reverence for nature.

"A hostile American reviewer of Wordsworth noted that 'he tries to look on nature as if she had never been looked on before' and he be-

moaned that [sic] fact that the poet seemed to be attracting an 'ever increasing school of devoted disciples' in America. Now, what he blames Wordsworth for sums up the ambition of many Transcendentalists. [...] it is important to stress how eager the Transcendentalists were to develop a new attitude towards nature, a new point of view" (Tanner 53).

In other words, man was encouraged to venture into the woods and become a "transparent eyeball" (cf. Miller 64). Through their pantheistic notion of nature the Transcendentalists' fusion of various disciplines came full circle, from philosophy via theology to a new understanding of and approach to nature. Charles Ives had an almost worshipful relation to nature, and in Thoreau he recognized a kindred spirit.

But one is certainly mistaken to believe that American Transcendentalism was merely the product of influences from outside. As George Hochfield argues:

But foreign influences did not create Transcendentalism; they would have been quite meaningless if they had not responded to a prior need stemming from an immediate cultural and intellectual predicament. [...] What the young men [...] felt most deeply was that a radically new world was taking shape around them, requiring for its comprehension and its fulfillment a new vision of man. It was the need for such a vision [...] which called Transcendentalism into being and gave it its distinctive American character. / For in its essence Transcendentalism was an attempt to complete in the world of thought what the American revolution had begun in the world of action. If one may attribute [...] a single overriding motive to the Transcendentalist group, it was no less than the creation of a new literature, the literature, in a word, of democracy. (Hochfield 36f.)

And a new literature (of democracy) they did indeed create, be it through the novels of Hawthorne or Melville, the poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, or the writings of Henry David Thoreau.¹

In the following discussion of Charles Ives, however, the focus will be, as mentioned at the beginning, on the Transcendentalists' em-

phasis of self-reliance both in regard to the individual American self and the American national and cultural self. While it is often argued that Emerson's "The American Scholar" is a declaration of cultural and intellectual independence, a statement of literary nationalism, Henry Nash Smith offers a different interpretation of his "fiction of the Scholar":

"[...] in the light of Emerson's prolonged struggle with the problem of vocation, the nationalistic phase of the address seems of diminished importance. Emerson was struggling to affirm a creed of self-reliance, and the fiction of the Scholar was a phase of the struggle. To the extent that the intellectual domination of Europe interferes with the Scholar's integrity, he must of course throw it off. But Europe is by no means the Scholar's worst enemy. His hardest struggles are civil and American: with vulgar prosperity; with the tyranny of the past, with 'the popular cry' [...]" (Smith 232).

I would prefer to see the two tendencies combined. Emerson's cultivation of solitude, isolation, independence, self-reliance, non-conformism, and freedom of the individual self necessarily entailed a throwing off of all kinds of interferences, whether from the inside or outside. Those from the outside were, as I would like to argue, stronger and more strainful than those from within at the time of the Transcendentalists. The label of "American Transcendentalism" is fitting, after all, through the combination of its two components. "Transcendentalism" refers to the German branch of philosophy and its influence, but at the same time, because of its etymological meaning, suggests a going beyond (the influences?), thus marking this movement as decidedly "American." Octavius Brooks Frothingham has poignantly summarized the essence of the *zeitgeist* in the first half of 19th-century America:

"Experiments in thought and life, of even audacious description, were made [...]. A feeling was abroad that all things must be new in the world. There was call for immediate application of ideas to life. In the old world, thoughts remained cloistered a generation before any questioned their bearing on public or private affairs. In the new world, the thinker was called on to justify himself on the spot by building an

engine, and setting something in motion. The test of a truth was its availability" (Frothingham 106).

American Transcendentalism was a meeting place of intellectual disciplines, of spiritual conceptions, old and new. As broad as this spectrum may be, though, music did not (immediately) belong to the variety of disciplines melting in this volcano of inspiration. And yet, it was the first great classical composer of the United States, the first truly "American" musician - Charles Ives - who was closely connected to American Transcendentalism, its basic notions and its main representatives; a man trusting and pursuing the new, setting American musical history in motion, and passing the test of his "truth" by its availability. It is certainly no coincidence that the American Transcendentalists were looking for the American-ness of the American mind and that Charles Ives, strongly influenced by their notions, marked the first step towards the development of the American-ness of American music. The making of an American cultural identity was diagnosed by Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 1830s as difficult, but urgent. The formation of a musical identity of America and the eventual "declaration of independence" from the European influences, however, was considerably harder and more arduous in the field of music.

What is immediately identified as "American" music is Jazz and the Blues. Those certainly bear the label of American-ness more than any classical music composed by an American, except perhaps the music of George Gershwin. The names of Charles Ives, Virgil Thomson, Roger Sessions, Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, and John Cage ring a less familiar bell. It is not surprising, then, that hardly any book surveys of the history of American music are in print. Two of the few exceptional examples are H. Wiley Hitchcock's *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*, published in 1969, and the New Grove *Twentieth-Century American Masters*, edited by John Kirkpatrick et al. and first published in 1980 in New York, offering individual portraits of various American composers. American (and other) musicologists have complained about the lack of historical surveys of the development of their national music. It almost seems as if the Americans display, at times, a kind of inferiority complex in regard to their own musical culture; but unjustly so.

II. *The Development of Music in America*

We know less about our own music than about that of western Europe. (Hitchcock 1976, ix)

H. Wiley Hitchcock has the history of American music begin with the first settlers in New England, although he admits that they must already have encountered a rich musical tradition of the Natives.² Since these early settlers were, above all, concerned with their mere survival, there was hardly time for music. The little music they had was simple and functional, used primarily, almost exclusively, for religious purposes. The *Bay Psalm Book* (1692) was the result of their emphasis on and interest in psalms. To the last of its altogether nine editions 13 melodies were added. They were enough for them to set 150 psalms to music. Because of the almost exclusive practice of music during church services, the Puritan ministers developed a strong interest in the improvement of the quality of their singing, which led to the significant singing-school movement. As early as 1722 Boston had a "Society for Promoting Regular Singing" which, among others, also enhanced the acquisition of the skill to read music at sight. There was no instrumental accompaniment due to the old Calvinist suspicion that instruments belonged to the devil (cf. Hitchcock 1976, 8). The singing schools soon became secular institutions as much as sacred ones, providing room and opportunity for social gatherings. The singing masters went from town to town establishing their schools and teaching music. It is assumed that this way the first American composers developed, who unpretentiously called themselves "tunesmiths" rather than artists. The Yankee tunesmiths marked the beginning with the "First New England School" of composers founded in 1770, and William Billings as their most famous representative. South of New England, in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas, it was the German Pietists and the Moravian brethren who introduced and developed one of the richest musical cultures in colonial America. "Theirs [the Moravians'] was the first concerted sacred music in America: instruments joined soloists and choirs in anthems, sacred arias, motets, and chorales" (Hitchcock 1976, 23). They played and sang "for weddings, christenings, funerals, and other solemn occasions" (Hitchcock 1976,

23). Music, with most of them, was a hobby, for they were occupied with other tasks for a living.

Until the mid-nineteenth century there is little evidence of secular music-making in colonial America. But it is assumed that in spite of their rigid restrictions even the Puritans delighted in secular music such as songs and dancing. There was a large repertory of Anglo-Scottish-Irish folk and popular songs. Many of the British ballads, the so-called "Child Ballads" named after Francis James Child, who had collected, commented, and edited them, were adapted to the experiences in the New World. But in the second half of the 18th century Americans are said to have begun to create their own ballads.

Opera and public concerts were performed fairly early in America, beginning in the 1730s in Charleston and New York, later also in Boston and Philadelphia. These were, however, understandably dominated by immigrant professional musicians which the big cities could afford to support in the post-Revolutionary period. They were to influence and shape the standards and taste of American musical culture. This was also the time of the rise of music publishing and instrument manufacture. By the end of the 18th century, public concerts and opera performances had become quite popular, and the interest in secular music in the urban home began to rise dramatically, although their musical culture can in no way be compared to that of Vienna, Rome, or Paris at the time.

The Revolutionary and the Federal periods produced military music, especially marches and patriotic songs. "Yankee Doodle" is still the most popular and best-known of those songs. The most neglected form of American music of this time is dance. Even the earliest colonists are said to have been great dancers. But their dance music was hardly ever written down. It was improvised according to the needs of the moment. Cotillions and country dances were the most popular forms in the late 18th century.

Apart from marches, dances, and some overtures to ballad-operas, colonial America produced little instrumental music. However, music by European composers such as Mozart, Haydn, Händel, and Beethoven was highly popular in the early nineteenth century.

Americans like to distinguish between classical and popular music, or cultivated and vernacular traditions. While the former was consciously developed out of various influences, the latter simply grew from existing native traditions and served mainly utilitarian and entertaining purposes. But this distinction between classical and vernacular developed only gradually. While popular music increasingly moved towards entertainment, fine-art music and a concomitant cultural idealism took their time to develop, nourishing themselves on European influences. Several aspects contributed to this development in the nineteenth century, especially the rapid geographical expansion of the nation as well as the new immigration patterns. While the "cultivated taste" was clearly preferred by the big cities on the East coast such as New York and Boston, the frontier settlements tended more towards the popular kind, "lacking the urbanity, wealth, leisure, and comforting traditions of the eastern seaboard cities [...]" (Hitchcock 1976, 53).

Land and money needed cultivation, not their sensibilities. Music, the most intangible and "useless" among the arts, had their special disdain and hostility. Leave music to the women, or to the immigrant "professors." Thus crystallized an American view of fine-art music as essentially the province of females, foreigners, or effeminates, a view still common in the twentieth century although it weakened rapidly after World War I. (Hitchcock 1976, 53)

The great flow of immigrants from Europe in the nineteenth century entailed, among others, a strong influence on the "cultivation" of America in general. In particular the ideals of Romanticism such as personal freedom, individualism, imagination, and the infinite were highly treasured, reflecting the common attitude of the Americans to life. And the ultimate of fine-art music was considered to be German music, which nobody seemed to escape. As a result, American musical traditions - the products of the Yankee tunesmiths, the Iro-American songs, etc. - were rejected. Lacking self-confidence and faith in their own art, they looked to Europe for models. America at the time was the land of technological progress, industrialization, and the natural sciences but not a land that produced great art of any value. "Who, in the four quarters of the globe, reads an American book, or

goes to an American play, or looks at an American painting or statue?' asked the British author-minister Sydney Smith in 1820" (Hitchcock 1976, 55). When the American journalist and composer William Fry asked the director of the Paris opera for permission to perform his own opera "Leonora" at his own expense, he was refused with the following remark: "In Europe we look upon America as an industrial country - excellent for electric telegraphs, but not for art" (qtd. in Hitchcock 1976, 55).

German musicians in large numbers were welcomed in America. The figure of the German music teacher became very popular. Even an American novel of the 1990s, Paula Huston's *Daughters of Song*,³ stages Professor Cornelius Toft, a German music teacher in his 80s, much venerated though feared by his students at the Baltimore conservatory, who does not only know his music but displays profound knowledge of theories of art, such as Hegel's, as well. On the other hand, many Americans went to Europe, especially to Germany, to receive a qualified education in music. Since Romanticism emphasized the individuality of the composer and the subjective artistic expression, these began to be treasured in America as well. The performer of music moved into the foreground, taking the place of the composer. Artists - pianists, singers - were enthusiastically received in the States: the beginning of a star-cult! In this first period of fine-art music in America the genres of church music, song, piano music, orchestral music, and opera were particularly cultivated. The current fondness for the piano encouraged Henry Steinway in 1853 to establish, together with his sons, his famous company in New York. It was also around this time that the first big orchestras were founded, such as the New York Philharmonic Society in 1842 and, although almost 40 years later, the Boston Symphony Orchestra. But they still performed the music of European composers, waiting for their self-confidence and pride to grow. This is most clearly reflected in a statement by Theodore Thomas, conductor of the New York Philharmonic and later of the newly founded Chicago Symphony Orchestra: "I do not believe in playing inferior works merely because they are American" (qtd. in Hitchcock 1976, 88).

This is where Charles Ives, inspired by Emerson, steps in. In his 1837 address "The American Scholar" Emerson had introduced the commonplace as a respectable subject of serious art. Ives, by accommodating gospel and other folk traditions into his "cultivated" music, enriched the existing musical lexicon. But he came later in this tradition, as David Robinson has argued, "working in a medium less receptive than literature to the vernacular" (Robinson 569). Having Emerson's warning in mind, "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe" (Emerson 62), Ives wanted to draw from the rich resources of his own country and emphasize the heritage of his home.

"His purpose [was] not to disown the great musicians of the past [...], but to remind American composers, in an era dominated by the European sensibility, to be faithful to their native heritage. [...] [I]n 1915 Ives gazed upon an America that still sent promising musicians to be educated in France, and imported its conductors from Germany" (Robinson 569).

And he wanted this changed.

Seen against the nineteenth-century background of an American musical culture sharply divided between cultivated and vernacular traditions, Ives's historical position is a unique one. Alone among his contemporaries, he embraced both traditions with reservation: his works emphatically declared that in its vernacular tradition American music had an artistically usable past; they also embodied the highest aspirations of the cultivated tradition. Moreover, Ives's open-mindedness and freshness of musical imagination were to be a continuing challenge to American composers after 1920. Ives is seen by many as the fountainhead of a new tradition in American music, a basically experimental, pathfinding one. (Hitchcock 1976, 171f.)

III. Charles Ives: A Revolutionist in the Field of American Music

There is an air of mystery about Charles Ives, an unsolved riddle, an enigma. [...] A look at the Ives picture reveals not a precise portrait, but a Picasso-like duality which can be both frustrating and fascinating for biographers and historians. (Perlis 141)

Hitchcock calls Ives "the most important and significant American composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Hitchcock 1976, 149). Charles Edward Ives was born in 1874 in Danbury, Connecticut, into a musical family. His father, George E. Ives, was a bandmaster, the youngest in the Union Army, "well grounded in Bach and counterpoint by Carl Foeppel" (Kirkpatrick 1). He taught instruments and theory, trained and led choirs, orchestras, and bands. Though he did not compose himself, he had a great interest in polytonality, acoustics, and microtones. He certainly had a great impact on his son's developing his own unusual style. David Mauk relates how Ives' father's experiments with sound prepared the boy for his own creative way:

"One of the best-known of these is his father's device of having two village bands march around the town square playing different tunes. Father and son listened to the changing sound intensities, the proportionate weight of the approaching and retreating sound masses, the interplay of melody lines and keys and tempi. It was great fun to the boy and fertile ground for the composer. The scene in the square that seemed comic or worse to other hearers was not alien to the boy; before the 1880s and in the immediate years afterward, his father had mixed keys and melodies and he himself had toyed with dissonances and seen his father's acceptance of 'out-of-tune' singers and out-of-step marchers" (Mauk 25).

Charles's maternal grandmother was a prominent singer. His grandparents were well acquainted with Transcendentalism, Emerson being their guest when lecturing in Danbury. "Ives was equally well grounded by his father not only in Bach but in all types of music dear to an American town, outdoors, indoors, or in church - also in free experiment" (Kirkpatrick 2). As early as age 12 Ives began to compose and play drums, and "at 14 he was the youngest salaried church organist in the state" (Kirkpatrick 2). Since he was extremely talented in playing the organ and the piano, his father hoped for him to make a career as a pianist. But he was much too shy to devote himself to solo performances. His character and personality have been described as paradoxical, because the introverted quiet Charles could also be iras-

cible, "a normal athlete or pathologically shy" (Kirkpatrick 2). Very early he developed the habit of musical quotation. "At first it was the way a march might bring in a well-known tune. Later it was the whole remembered world of his boyhood, a shared vocabulary he could use clearly or subtly, aspiring ideally to be a voicing, as by humanity at large, of the Emersonian 'Over-Soul'" (Kirkpatrick 2). Many critics have remarked on his use of quotation as an outstanding feature of his work that must not be overlooked either in its significance or its indebtedness to Emerson. David B. Robinson describes this habit as much more complex than commonly assumed, and points out that Ives drew authority in this regard from Emerson's little-known essay "Quotation and Originality." With Emerson's words in mind that we all quote from endless sources and that truth belongs to no single individual, "Ives had no compunction about appropriating other men's melodies, and even techniques from other arts, for his own compositions" (Robinson 570f.). What was new and extraordinary about his quoting style was the fact the he "quoted" from all kinds of vernacular sources, folk songs, gospels, marches, etc. Ives heard a recital of Paderewski while attending grammar school in New Haven, and in 1894 witnessed a performance of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* in New York. But "[i]t was probably his experience of chanted psalms that prompted the series of settings [...] that are the major achievement of his early years. They are like Emerson's *Self-Reliance* come to life, or like a clairvoyant vision of Old Testament exaltation seen in the violent context of ancient life and death" (Kirkpatrick 4).

While a student at Yale he showed Horatio Parker, the German-trained new professor of music, his setting of Psalm lxvii, and was told to resolve a certain 9th. Discouraged by his teacher, he was set on the right track again by his father, who advised him: "Tell Parker that every dissonance doesn't have to resolve, if it doesn't happen to feel like it, any more than every horse should have to have its tail bobbed just because it's the prevailing fashion" (qtd. in Kirkpatrick 5). This little anecdote certainly paved the way for the mature composer who would freely make use of dissonances. "Free development is not, of course, new with Ives. But he is one of the first composers to juxtapose discordant and incongruous elements in the construction of his

musical architectonics" (Walhout 359). When his father, whom he had idealized and with whom he had formed a great team in music and otherwise, suddenly died in 1894, Ives was devastated.

During his college years he continued to experiment with hymn quotation and polytonal dissonance. Over the years he composed more than 40 songs, marches, overtures, anthems, and organ pieces, a quartet, and a symphony. As a result of his intense musical activities he graduated from Yale with an academic average of D+ (cf. Kirkpatrick 6). He had learned, though, that making music could not earn him a living. Luckily, he was offered a job by a relative with an insurance company in New York. This would mark the beginning of a complicated life. The demands on his time of business were intense, and he could only use his spare time to pursue his interest in music. He was never involved in the professional music life, and thus eventually developed his own aesthetic (cf. Hitchcock 151). Soon he began to apply his creative ideas and transcendentalist values to his business life as well.⁴ But the nights and the weekends were dedicated to music. He worked as an organist, finished a second symphony, composed a clarinet trio now lost, and his seven-movement cantata *The Celestial Country*. One day he left his best anthems and organ music in the choir library of the church, where they were later thrown out when the church moved. Unfortunately, only little of his organ music has therefore survived, and his anthems are only known from sketches.

He became more and more daring with his musical experiments, and when in 1905 he fell in love with his best friend's sister, Harmony Twichell, he literally exploded with activity and new ideas, composing "a whole world of far-out music" (Kirkpatrick 8). In 1906 he first began to show heart problems, and he was advised to take a vacation. The following year he began to sketch an *Emerson Overture* but never finished it. In 1908 he married Harmony Twichell, and they led a happy life together. While being creative and productive with his music and successful in his private life, he also prospered with his own newly founded company. "How could this financially successful insurance executive be the most innovative American composer of the century?", asks Vivian Perlis (Perlis 142). Critics such as Walter E. Johnston have observed striking parallels between Ives and William

Carlos Williams, both in regard to their life and to their work, although there is no question of direct influence. "Both were aware of working across the current of their times, opposed to the traditions of their craft, committed to new expression. Both worked in relative isolation, belonged to no artistic group, and had little recognition until late in life. And both evolved styles that are strikingly similar" (Johnston 127f.) They were almost contemporaries, lived to be approximately the same age, and, above all, made a living from a career in business or medicine. When in 1911 the Iveses moved out of New York to Hartsdale, he started *The Fourth of July* and had

the idea of a *Concord Sonata* for piano - recomposing the *Emerson Overture* into a sonata movement (glorifying the adventurer into the unknown), some *Hawthorne* sketches into an extravagant fantasy (a visionary blur of the real and the unreal), the *Orchard House Overture* into a family group of *The Alcotts* (like an exalted daguerrotype), and some *Thoreau* sketches into "an autumn day of Indian summer at Walden Pond" (a strangely inner intensity) - the whole recomposition being "one person's impression of the spirit of transcendentalism." (Kirkpatrick 10)

This piece is often considered his best work. It is a musical comment on and interpretation of the spirit of Concord and provides insight into the writers, their moods, ideas, and views. The Emerson movement is very complex, suggesting his intricate philosophy. Hawthorne is difficult in a different manner because Ives was concerned to evoke his awareness of the impact of sins and sinning on the human psyche, which was certainly not an easy task. The Alcotts part is the most accessible one because it is not so much concerned with philosophical principles but with the spirit of the Orchard House. In Thoreau, Ives recognized a fellow musician since he played the flute (cf. Rosa 438f.). "Thoreau is particularly illuminating because it evokes in its hearers a keen awareness of the broad contemplative margins of that sensibility which created not only *Walden* but also many of Thoreau's other writings" (Goudie 309).

He played the whole thing for a friend in 1912. In the same year he composed the *Robert Browning Overture* and the *First Orchestral*

Set: Three Plays in New England. He bought a farm near Danbury and, after settling in, finished *The Fourth of July*, the Second String Quartet, and the *Westminster Chimes*. In 1914 the family moved back to New York for the winters but continued to spend the summers in Connecticut. They began to invite families to stay with them on their farm and eventually adopted the daughter of a family, who seemed to need more country air, as Edith Osborne Ives. In 1918 Ives suffered a severe heart attack and had to go out of business for a year. Spending two winters in North Carolina, he made clear ink copies of *Concord* and finished his *Essays Before a Sonata* (cf. Kirkpatrick 13). Ives discusses in detail various philosophical concepts of Emerson, such as unity and the particular versus the universal. He adopted his concept of unity and endowed it with new meaning. Ives certainly did not agree with the standard opinion that a "unified" work of art was good, one lacking unity was bad, the lack of unity suggesting disorganization, even chaos. Rather, he chose the unity of a day to reflect his ideas of the unity of a piece of art. "To Ives, the kind of relationship a morning has to the evening is as much unity as is necessary in a work of art. [...] What matters is not any assimilation or similarity of events but simply that they occur within the same 24-hour period [...]. This kind of unity gives the composer much more leeway than most aestheticians would allow" (Davidson 35). Ives strives for the universal through the particular, and the particular locale for him is New England. Since America takes pride in accommodating a variety and diversity of nationalities, he believes that American music ought to reflect this inclusiveness (cf. Robinson 569). He sees in Emerson the explorer of the unknown, not only in the religious but mainly in an epistemological and anthropological sense. He also comments on Emerson's character as inspiring and supporting, and praises, above all, his courage. In regard to Hawthorne he finds himself fascinated with his portrayals of the supernatural, phantasmal, and mystical, and the philosophy he weaves around the individual, concrete human being. His comments on The Alcotts is an almost quaint family portrait, focusing on the mundane rather than on the philosophical. Thoreau, for Ives, was a musician of a special kind. He believed that Thoreau's rhythmical prose and his ability to listen to the sounds of nature dis-

tinguished him as a composer as well. Reactions to these essays varied, but the fact that they were re-edited in 1962 gives evidence of their quality. "Ives was more a philosopher than a composer; he had a story to tell, a memory to relate, or a message to communicate. And music was his best medium. Ives believed that ideas could be projected in sound and that someday men might speak in one universal language of musical sounds" (Perlis 146).

In 1924 the Iveses spent six weeks in England, and in 1926 they bought a house in New York. But soon after moving in, Ives suffered a "creative breakdown" because of his double life as musician and business man, and he never seems to have recovered. Exhausted, he reduced his activities to revising and finishing earlier works.

Curiously enough, it was at this time that the interest in and enthusiasm for his music began to rise. During the following years his music was performed in the US, Havana, Paris, Berlin, and Budapest. The Iveses spent more than a year in Europe, returning home in 1933. In 1947 the Pulitzer Prize added to his reputation as the composer of "the greatest music by an American" (Kirkpatrick 16), and the birth of a grandson crowned his private happiness. Ives, by habit, did not attend the performances of his own works. In 1954, after having recovered from a minor operation, he suddenly suffered a stroke and died, his beloved wife and daughter being with him at his deathbed.

Ives was innovative in polytonality and polyrhythm, a genius for melodic variation and eloquence, and used the quotation of tunes as a springboard for the creation of recognizable melodies in new disguise (cf. Kirkpatrick 19). But

[a]ny attempt to find in Ives a consistent development of musical style would have encountered his scorn for the whole idea of 'manner.' He regarded the cultivation of a personal idiom as a limitation, a retreat from freely pursued ideals, a lowering of standards. (Kirkpatrick 29f.).

Because of his use of folk elements and his emphasis on the native traditions, Ives is often celebrated as a "folk hero." At the age of 16 he composed a number of variations on *America* which, today, "in an orchestral arrangement by William Schuman, is the most often performed work by any American composer" (Perlis 142). Charles Ives

did not only compose music *on* America, he composed *American* music, marking the first step of "cultivated" music in America acquiring a truly "American" identity. He thus made Emerson's prophecy come true: "[i]f the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him" (Emerson 63).

Notes

¹ "From 1908 to 1913, Ives worked on a series of 'Men of Literature' overtures which were to include Emerson, Browning, Arnold, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Henry Ward Beecher. Emerson so inspired him that the original piece for male chorus was transfigured [...] into a piano overture and then into a piano sonata [...]" (Golemba 37).

² The following outline of the development of American music highlights only the most important steps and aspects. For a more detailed analysis cf. H. Wiley Hitchcock. *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

³ Paula Huston. *Daughters of Song*. New York: Random House, 1995.

⁴ "Within the business, Ives functioned as an educator, counseling agents and writing articles and brochures expounding his ideas and theories. It was not unusual to see a quotation from Emerson or Thoreau in a newspaper or magazine ad written by Ives" (Perlis 145). Critics have also commented again and again on the generosity of this man: "To him [Ives] the insurance business was a vehicle for protecting the helpless; he developed policies to insure children, college students, influenza victims, and widows" (Perlis 145).

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**'Unveiling the Secret Arcanum of Affectional Alchemy' and the
'Mysteries of Eulis': Paschal Beverly Randolph, African-
American Sex Magician, and Sex Radicalism in Late-Victorian
America**

Louis J. Kern

"He's fond of the women! He's fond of the women, - al-to-gether too
fond of 'em!' As if *that* was a crime, seeing that I came by it naturally,
- for my father was so before me and the fault is constitu- tional, and
'runs in the family.'"

Love and Its Hidden History (1870)

Paschal Beverly Randolph

"Many years ago I made the discovery . . . that most of human ills, so-
cially, domestic, mental, and moral were the result of infractions by
excess, entire continence, or inversion, therefore *perversion* of the
sexual passion and instinct common to the race. But there was no
known cure for those evils, and I was therefore compelled to search
for one in the regions of the unknown."

Seership: The Magic Mirror (1892)

Paschal Beverly Randolph

Although all but forgotten today, Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-75) was a prominent Spiritualist, a founder of the American Rosacruzian movement, and a pioneer in the theory and practice of sexual magic in Victorian America. Of ambiguous, racially-mixed parentage, orphaned at the age of five, Randolph grew up on the mean streets of the Five Points district of New York City, where he seems to have endured an archetypal Horatio Alger childhood, working for a time as a bootblack on the city streets and, while in a foster family (where the wife was prostituted by her husband), begging food from door-to-door. His ego development and vision of the world were powerfully shaped by these early experiences, and the foundations of his lifelong sense of victimization and persecution (no doubt continually reinforced by his status as a racial outsider) were laid at this time. As he expressed it in his late autobiographical sketch (1872), largely in-

tended as an apologia for his career and a public denial of accusations of his advocacy of and practice of free love,

thus at less than ten years old I became proficient in knowledge of the shady side of human nature, which had better have been postponed to a riper and steadier period of life. Up to my fifteenth year I was cuffed and kicked about the world, from my fifteenth year to the present time, the pastime has been varied, - that is, I have been kicked and cuffed.¹

In his teens he spent a year or two as a cabin boy, and in the early 1840s was living in Portland, Maine, where he appears to have received a minimal basic education and to have learned and practiced the dyer's and barber's trades, two of the limited occupations generally open to free Blacks in this period. When the Hydesville Rappings of the Fox sisters provided the spark that ignited the Spiritualist movement, Randolph was living in Stockbridge, New York, where he seems to have resided for about a decade.² He was swept up by the ultraist reform enthusiasms and revivalist excesses that characterized the radical wing of the Spiritualist movement in this era, especially as they found expression in a bewildering range of universal reforms, and in the various philosophies positing "individual sovereignty," "spiritual affinities," and free love. Randolph devoted himself wholeheartedly to the early Spiritualist movement, becoming first a medium then a trance speaker, and by 1852, appropriating medical credentials as a "clairvoyant physician."³

During this period, Randolph, who apparently had natural talents as a medium, was a novice in the radical sexuality of ultraist Spiritualism, but an apt pupil. He was influenced by such prominent figures in the movement as Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Great American Seer," whose "harmonial" philosophy gave form and coherence to the traffic with spirits, and the sex radicals who translated the revelations of the spiritual world into the language of bodies in the physical world - Stephen Pearl Andrews, the "Pantarch," chief "Individual Sovereign" of the anarcho-communist, free-love community, Modern Times on Long Island, New York; and John Murray Spear, the strangely eccentric founder of the Kiantone Community (1853), who

viewed the sex act as the medium connecting the material and the spiritual worlds and as the life force of the universe.⁴

By the late 1850s, however, Randolph had abandoned both the orthodox Spiritualist movement and its radical free love wing, though his public renunciation of his earlier affiliations was more apparent than real, since his later career pursued even more radical forms of occult influences and his sexual magic ultimately sanctified mutual orgasm as the essence of the sex act, which implicitly underscored the pleasure principle as the primary rationale of sexuality, a principle that provided a physical analogue to the "spiritual affinities" of the radical Spiritualists. Though a paucity of biographical details prevents us from making a definitive determination of Randolph's motives for dissociating himself from the radical sexual principles of Spiritualism, both his earlier association with it in the popular mind and a suggestion of a personal motivation for renouncing it are provided by the polemical anti-Spiritualist literature. In a typical "unmasking" of the deviancy of marginal religious and social movements, Benjamin Hatch wrote that,

P.B. Randolph, a popular Spiritual Lecturer, abandoned his wife and children married another woman who, in turn, soon abandoned him, and he attempted suicide, finally embraced religion. . . . confessed his faults and delusions, and like a true and honorable man, returned to the bosom of his family.⁵

Certainly, the persecutions of the socially and sexually deviant in the ante-bellum period as experienced by communitarian groups like the Oneida Community that practiced a "Bible Communism" that was expressed in the social realm as pantagamy and in the sexual realm as "male continence" (a form of *coitus interruptus*), could only have intensified Randolph's personal paranoia rooted in his early maternal loss, his abandonment, and his ambiguous sense of racial identity.

In any case, despite his public confession of disaffection with the Spiritualist movement, in his personal life Randolph continued to practice the kind of loose sexual alliances that were fostered by the erotically charged atmosphere of the mediumistic trance. While still legally married to Mary Jane, his first wife, he contracted a marriage

in Louisiana in 1864 or 1865, and fathered a daughter; in 1866 he married for a third time and fathered a son. In 1873 he married Kate Corson. There is no documentary evidence to sustain the legality of any but the first marriage, so if Randolph was not, strictly speaking, practicing free love, he was certainly in violation of the bigamy statutes.⁶ The fact of the matter seems to have been that Randolph could never get enough love to feel secure; his fear of abandonment became a self-fulfilling prophecy through his association with the free love movement. Despite his later championing of female sexual self-determination, at the time of his "conversion" from sex radicalism to social orthodoxy he was operating under the patriarchal assumptions of the double standard. From a personal perspective, free love was bad because it had resulted in his repeated abandonment. Significantly, his assessment of the failure of his first two marriages laid the blame squarely on free love: "Radicalism debauched both wives, and rendered a happy home a wilderness of woe."⁷

By 1860 Randolph had publicly and definitively aligned himself with the conservative critics of radical Spiritualism and its erotic doctrines, as he sought to "unveil" another of Victorian America's subversive isms. As he expressed his position,

all the seductions and fornications, affinity business and home desertions that have occurred within the ranks of believers since the movement began, is directly traceable to the influence of the anti-Christian, God-denying, obsessed Spiritualists.⁸

But Randolph's condemnation of free love is at best inconsistent and apparently disingenuous, given his continued devotion to the philosophy and practice of sexual freedom throughout his life. Perhaps the key to his position on free love lay in wilful reductionism. He subscribed after 1858 to the mainstream conflation of free love with unbridled licentiousness. He seems to have wilfully ignored the serious philosophical side of the movement that sought to problematize the sexual politics of the era through advocating more liberal divorce laws, deconstructing and reconceptualizing the institution of marriage, protecting women from spousal abuse, championing greater sexual and social freedom for women through elective reproduction, and pro-

posing the perfection of the race through eugenics. He also rejected the idealized form of free love that maintained that its goal was to achieve the perfect match of *eternal* "affinities" ("spiritual wifery"). Given Randolph's sexual history, he would not have found this an amenable doctrine. For him, free love was "counterfeit love" that threatened fundamental institutions, reversed ascriptive sex roles, and sustained sexual inequality by depriving women of the equal right to sexual fulfilment.

By the early 1870s, in a consideration of the notorious MacFarland case, Randolph posed the "libertine philosophy" as the antithesis of social purity and advocated vigilante justice in its extirpation. If a man should corrupt another man's wife or daughters or a woman seduce another woman's husband under the cover of free love doctrines, he maintained that the aggrieved party could seek vengeance "*even to the extent of moderate lynching*":

If any man or woman takes advantage of the common idea of the right of free speech, and uses that right in the enunciation of doctrines favoring Eoncubinage, free love, and the destruction of the family and social compact, any community is perfectly justified in tarring, feathering, and riding on a rail out of town, any and all such disturbers of the public health and morals. If bad women and worse men establish houses of assignation and infamy, insurance companies ought not to pay damages when the people, headed by the wives of the town, burn that den to the ground, and the wives are justified in getting rid of such a calamitous nuisance *in any possible way*.⁹

Although he conceptualized free love as a primary threat to female purity and domestic order, he also argued that its apparent attractions for women immured in abusive or loveless marriages was cruelly delusory. With mordant irony he observed that of the thousands of "passional attractions" and free lovers he claimed to have seen over two decades, he had

yet to see the first woman made happy by or through either, if she practiced the doctrine, [nor] have I ever seen one made joyous by the knowledge that her husband was sustaining such relations beyond her homeside.¹⁰

But ironically, free love proved an even greater snare for Randolph himself. Though he tried mightily to clear his name from associations with the doctrine, he had to admit that in his personal life, "I have loved not wisely but too muchly," and that he had a weakness for "sweet-meats,"

a weakness born within me, and of which I never have been cured, and never expect to be, although the *kinds* have not always been the same; for in youth I loved cakes, candies, and preserves; since then the animated kind, albeit I have never committed a crime for love . . . and never degraded an innocent member of my mother's sex.¹¹

And indeed, he gloried in his sexuality. He reported as "strikingly true and correct" the report of the noted phrenologist, O.S. Fowler, on his character, wherein the latter noted that

you are most intensely attached to the ladies. Your love is of an ardent - extremely ardent kind, and because you carry things to an undue extreme, you will love a woman to death, or else hate her correspondingly, and may some time find your love turned.¹²

Randolph's erotic impetuosity and his commercial ineptitude led to his arrest on a search warrant in Boston in late February 1872 on the charge that his writings were obscene. From his own account of the episode, it appears that impecunious and desperate, he was led astray by confidence men, while he was otherwise engaged pursuing "a delicious little neighbor" of one of the rascals or involved with a certain Mert La Hue, whom he contracted as an agent to sell his books. Randolph spent the weekend locked up, but was released on Monday morning when the presiding judge ruled that the works detectives had seized in his rooms were not statutorily obscene. Randolph took the opportunity to write a melodramatic account of events, casting himself as the innocent dupe of unprincipled villains, and providing lengthy testimonials to his genius and integrity. Using the facts of his imprisonment as a prologue, Randolph developed a fantastic courtroom mini-drama with three legal advocates - the prosecuting attorney, a free-love advocate, and Randolph himself, which he called

"The Great Free Love Trial." The drama provides an apologia for his life and serves as the capstone to his ongoing attack on free love. He casts himself in the role of the abused naïf, whose loves were mistakenly misunderstood as manifestations of a "lower passion." "True," he writes,

none but libertines and Free-love Freedom-shriekers, of no sex at all, ever made that gross charge against me! and no *decent* person ever said or even thought it! There are no regrets in my soul, save that I was sometimes so blind as to love those who knew not the sacred meaning of the word; and these, when I have refused their wild bacchanals, and loathingly, shudderingly turned from their proffered orgies, have, stung to the quick, sedulously sought by lying tongues to drag my name down to the horrible level of their own.¹³

As Randolph shrewdly points out, his persecution and imprisonment fortuitously provided the occasion for him to write a self-exculpating book and also provided him with more public notoriety and a broader audience. In addition, they provided the pretext for his fictionalized "Free Love Trial" that allowed him to address the subtler insinuation that his books if not legally obscene were nonetheless morally reprehensible because of their "systematic[ly] and eloquently setting forth the alluring doctrines of freedom [so] that whatsoever man or woman should read them straightway became an advocate of that ism, and a disciple of whoever was the leader of that movement."¹⁴ Interestingly, he also took the opportunity to present a more balanced picture of free love, which he more graciously contrasted with sensual license here.

If Randolph took such a consistently hard-line stance in opposition to free love during the latter half of his life, in what sense can he be considered a sex radical? Why was Orson S. Fowler able to call him "an out-and-out Radical in everything, *and so far in advance of public opinion as to be constantly martyred*"?¹⁵ His radicalism was manifest in his role as America's foremost exponent of magic-based eroticism, his frank and open discussion of female sexuality and his advocacy of the erotic equality of the sexes, his straight-forward discussion of sexual disorders and the proposal of remedies to cure them,

his elevation of human sexuality to the central position in social life, and his sacralization of the erotic as an instrumentality of white magic - "Sex-power," he proclaimed, "is God-power."¹⁶ In addition, in an era of patent medicines, he was an unorthodox physician who concocted and dispensed his personal love potions and sovereign remedies to cure venereal diseases and to inhibit masturbation, and who experimented with drugs (chiefly hashish) as a means of erotic enhancement, heightened consciousness, and transcendence of physical limitations to gain access to the spiritual realm.

Then, too, Randolph's sexology often paralleled that of other radical sex reformers who advocated varieties of free-love practice. For instance, Randolph advocated *coitus reservatus* at one point in his career as a means of preserving the vital fluid believed to be inherent in male semen, a tenet of the widespread belief in spermatic economy that held that ejaculation robbed a man of his life's essence. This practice, institutionalized in the "complex marriage" of the Oneida Community by John Humphrey Noyes, was proposed as a central element of Randolph's sexual system in *The Grand Secret; or, Physical Love in Health and Disease* (1861), and in his privately circulated pamphlet, "The Golden Letter, or Chart of the Polarities of Physical Love," that provided details to physicians on the practice as a method of contraception. As John P. Deveney has pointed out, Randolph also advocated a number of ancillary ideas related to Noyes' "male continence" doctrine. Like Noyes' formulation of the system of "ascending-descending fellowship," which stressed the danger to those of superior vital-spiritual force in relationships with those of lesser vitality, Randolph developed the notion of "vampirism" to describe those who only took energy from their partners and never gave of their own: they fattened themselves and enhanced their vital force at the expense of weakening their victims. Randolph's sexology, like that of Noyes, also emphasized the role of sex between those who were equally matched as a medium of exchange and replenishing of "nervous energy" and "vital fluid." Finally, Randolph directed a significant portion of his formal sexual magic in *The Ansairctic Mystery* to the question of eugenical reproduction, adopting the term "stirpiculture" that Noyes had used to describe the selective breeding experiment at Oneida.¹⁷

So, despite his repeated rejection of free love, Randolph's credentials of sexual radicalism are strong. But Randolph was no mere camp follower of the more prominent sex radicals of the day; he was a bold and original thinker who synthesized diverse sexual and magical elements from a broad spectrum of sources to develop a unique and original sexological system. It is that system which we must examine if we are to assess the sexual radicalism of Paschal Beverly Randolph.

By the early 1860s, Randolph's disaffection with radical Spiritualism and its free love predilections had led him to reformulate his cosmological vision in accord with ancient Hermetic principles and Neoplatonic doctrines of the erotic striving of the human soul for reunification with the All, the One, the Over-Soul. The development of his mature cosmology, which essentially assigned Spiritualism a subordinate role in accessing the spirit world (an intermediate realm between the material world and the domain of pure Soul, of absolute being). Central to Randolph's vision was the ancient concept that the essence of humanness was triplicate - body, spirit, and soul. He clearly distinguished the "spirit world" - accessible through traditional Spiritualist means of clairvoyance, trance, and mediumship - from the higher and purer "soul world" - accessible only through visionary or mystical experiences of the adept. These ideas, most fully developed in *Dealings With the Dead. The Human Soul, Its Migrations and Its Transmigrations* (1862), appeared anonymously under the by-line "The Rosacrucian." The assignment of authorial responsibility for this work, Randolph's first expression of his mature cosmology, is quite significant. It suggests that Randolph saw the work as transitional - the centerpiece in the intellectual conflation and transformation of traditional Spiritualism and orthodox Christian theology into an hermetic occultism.¹⁸

The key to that transformation, which would find its fullest expression in Randolph's system of sexual magic, was the concept of the constitution of the human spirit or soul from the "highest and finest essences of matter," i.e., as purified matter. As Randolph saw it, the spirit/soul was

an invisible, indivisible being shaped like a man, woman, or child, having head, feet, arms, hair, stomach, lungs, eyes, hands, legs, mouth

- a perfect human being both in mind and person. It has all the apparatus that we have, save that no liquids, but only aerial fluids, circulate through its vessels, are secreted by its organs, or imparted by its contact.¹⁹

Of these ethereal bodies, Randolph tells us that "there is no micturation or defecation there as here," and "no matter how crooked, maimed, hacked up, or misshapen one may have been here, he finds himself perfectly whole and sound when he arrives there, so far as externals are concerned; and eventually becomes so mentally and otherwise."²⁰ In this physically perfected and spiritually perfectible realm (a vision analogous to the Christian heaven with bodily resurrection), the celestial order rests on the "universality of the sex principle." It is expressed locally, Randolph informs us, through "its male and female *principles*, and it is by the attraction, contact, fusions and interactions of these two that progress is achieved and advancement made. There is no part of God's universe where these principia do *not* operate."²¹

In Randolph's cosmology, then, sex is conceived of as the foundational principle of the universe and the instrumentality of the progression of the soul in its post-mortem journey towards perfection. It follows, then, that the spirit and soul realms will provide appropriate means of sexual association for the perfected bodies in the soul state. In essence, the free love and "soul affinities" doctrines that Randolph was at such pains to distance himself from in his other works are reintroduced here as the sex ideal of the spiritual and soul worlds. Worldly institutions regulating sexual associations cannot pass the bourn of mortality; beyond the grave, free association prevails. As Randolph put it:

Marriage, either mono or polygamic, is of course unknown; but an indiscriminate freedom in its functions is the universal rule. Of course, there can be no palpable result to this; for no children are born there, but they do not comprehend the fact. They imagine different results, and their females realize their wishes with reference to offspring; but of course not as upon the earth.²²

Randolph's heaven is the etherealization of the free love ideal wedded to the concept of the eternal progression of the soul towards perfection through erotic striving. And since advancement of the soul through the attainment of higher and nobler ideals is the essence of the spirit/soul land, Randolph rejects the notion of "eternal affinity." Using a scholastic metaphor to describe the mechanism of soul progression in relation to post-mortem sexuality, Randolph observes that

no one goes alone from one grand division to another; no one can gravitate from a low to a higher state before he or she is fully fit to do so, and then they graduate in couples. But it does not follow that these loving classmates or kindly ones are ever the same persons. It were a poor heaven if only one true soul sincerely loved us. If comrade A, in division three is not prepared to go with B to division four, then A's place is immediately taken by C or D, who *are* prepared, and the union, thus based on *fitness*, is far closer than that just dissolved.²³

Therefore, since

no two souls can forever develop in parallel lines, one of them must, in time, diverge from, advance beyond, rise above, or constitutionally change, out-grow, or offgrow the other; the "eternal" affinity must be considerably foreshortened and lopped off here and there, until common sense makes all clear, plain, [and] right.²⁴

But Randolph realizes that his heaven can appear to the carnal eye like the Mohometan paradise. So, he hastens to add that "lust or passions, *as such*, are lopped off altogether in the higher communities, and loftier stages of *post-mortem* existence."²⁵ Like the body, sexuality is perfected through the upward progress of the soul in the spiritual realm. Randolph is again at pains to discriminate his fantasy vision of etherealized sex, mediated by purified affections and perfectly attuned affinities from the processes of the "nominal reformers" like "individual sovereigns,"

those who dwelt in "Agapomeme," or the "abode of love," along with the late "Brother" Prince. . . .the nasty "perfectionists" of Oneida, who live in "complex" marriage with four hundred wives. . . . under the tu-

telage of Noyes. . . . the latter-day saints of Utah [and the] "Passional Attractionists," or "free love," which gets more people into hot water than into heavenly bliss.²⁶

Even in the realm of eternal bliss, Randolph could not escape the onus of guilt through association and youthful adherence to the principles of earthly free love.

With the invidious comparison of the flexible "affinities" of the soul world with the puerile associations of worldly free lovers and his acerbic dismissal of those who sought marital reform through what he considered institutionalized lust or "homeopathic" libertinage, Randolph created a foundation for the logical introduction of his ideas on sexuality in the public forum. In the first edition of *After Death* he had indicated his intention of developing his ideas on earthly sexuality at greater length in a future work, and he was at some pains to tweak the demand for the expression of his alternatives to radical reform in the advertising copy for the 1868 second edition of that work, where he promised an expanded appendix to that volume to be entitled *Love and Its Hidden History*. Indeed, that work was published as a full-length book under that title in 1868, and was in its fourth edition by 1869.²⁷ Along with *The Master Passion* (bound together with *Love and Its Hidden History* in the 1870 edition), *Casca Llana* (1871), and the posthumously published *Magica Sexualis* (1931), it comprised the central corpus of Randolph's mature reflections on sexual happiness and the amelioration of the marital institution. These works constitute some of the most extended development of sexological discourse in the Victorian era, and although written from the perspective of the physician were far less a medicalization of sex than an application of occult principles, common sense, and widely-shared truisms about the sexual and reproductive body to the reform of the sexual economy of the period.

Love and Its Hidden History and *The Master Passion*, published as a double volume under the pseudonym "Count St. Leon" in 1870, present a patchwork of Randolph's version of contemporary sexual ideology, attacks on social evils - masturbation, prostitution, abortion, and free love - , practical health advice to the lovelorn, titbits of sexual hygiene, discussions of natural means of contraception, and, as a leit-

motif, a disquisition on feminine beauty and the means to attain and enhance it. He begins his discussion of sex with a powerful demurrer from contemporary mainstream biological thought, which posited a homeostatic somatic system in which protoplasmic waste was offset by protoplasmic rejuvenation. Randolph, adopting a radical revision of contemporary spermatic economy doctrine, argued that protoplasm, the vehicle of the body's nervous energy, was an innate, finite resource. Bodily health required that it be husbanded and not wasted:

I believe that every one of us is born with a certain amount of protoplasmic capital, both in fact and the power of gaining it. Nothing wastes so much as heat, hence the affections will not bear too much tampering with, for of all the earthly powers of life-destroying, none is so effectual as the passions, especially the amorous, for *it* destroys and saps the very citadel and capital of life itself.²⁸

Given this premise, Randolph argues that free love is physiologically unnatural and suicidal because

whoever allows the amative passion to be excited by new parties generates vital magnetism in vast quantities - and loses it; for once excited it *must* pass from the system in some way until the normal plane is again reached, yet the life thus lost can *never* be wholly regained. Where monogamy prevails there is never a *continued* blaze of passion, not that excessive depletion consequent, invariably, upon indiscriminate promiscuity.²⁹

The threat to the body's delicate balance of magnetic force and nervous energy made sex a particularly risky proposition. The careful lover would strive for affectional balance, the wise lover would learn to discriminate between love and passion. Randolph insisted on the naturalness of the universal human need to love and be loved, but advised would be lovers to give due attention to the apparent level of vital force of a prospective lover, for an overpowering attraction is not always love. Sometimes an irresistible magnetic attraction indicates that the attractive person merely feeds off the vital energy of others. "Such persons," Randolph contends,

are vampyrized, and a vampyre is a person born *love-hungry*, who having *none* themselves, who are empty of it, but who fascinate and literally suck others dry who *do* have love in their natures. Defeat it thus: the vampyre is selfish, is never content but in handling, fondling its object, which process leaves the victim utterly exhausted, and they don't know why [...] the vampyre seeks to prolong his or her own existence, life, and pleasure, at the expense of your own.³⁰

Such notions were commonplace in nineteenth-century sexuality, and Randolph employs them in what seems a hackneyed, conventional sort of way that reinforces the sexual status quo, for he frankly supports monogamic marriage, vehemently opposes abortion, combats masturbation as a "crime against nature," reluctantly recognizes only "natural" means of contraception (primarily timing in relation to the fertility cycle), and maintains that the primary purpose of sex is reproduction. But the reader soon realizes that these ideas are the sexual mantra of Victorian society; by employing them, Randolph reassures the general reader that the book is not the product of a wild-eyed radical but rather a respectable, socially conservative discourse on human sexuality, perfectly suitable for readers of either sex. Having reassured his readers, Randolph then proceeds to introduce his more radical ideas, grounded in the assumption that love (sexual pleasure) is the primary human need, and that the marital institution fails dismally in meeting that need, especially for women. Noting, for example, that "passion's true object" from a biological point of view is reproduction, he makes it clear that socially and psychologically human sexuality has prioritized the pleasure principle. The need to accommodate the personal need for love to the differential sexual responses of the male and the female, he suggests, is the essence of sexological concern. Passion (lust) too often inverts love, since it is habitually

perverted to merely animal, not purely affectional uses [and thus] it is a desecration of woman's holy nature, and an outrage on the exquisite sanctities of her being. Unwelcome "love" is no love at all. To force nature is a crime against God.³¹

The primary problem with the sexual relationship (and here Randolph intends his analysis of the imbalance of male and female sexual response as a critique of the institution of marriage as well) was physiological. In this respect, Randolph's delineation of the sexual function is an intuitive anticipation of the laboratory-based, differentially gendered, human sexual response model proposed by Masters and Johnson nearly a century later. Like twentieth-century sexologists, Randolph assumed that ideal marriage (or a good sex life) required "health, love, fitness, respect, tenderness, and *reciprocalness*." Sex under any other circumstances, he believed, was debilitating and anti-life, but more importantly, as his descriptive language makes clear, was one-sided and suited only to a perverted male construction of the sex act. Such intercourse was "actually but another form of self-pollution, rapidly depletive of magnetic and vital force to all concerned, and for special reasons, easily discernible, provocative of rapidly reached and quickly ended, and very imperfect satisfaction."³² Such hasty, selfish lovers were, in Randolph's view, "human brutes. . . . not *men*, much less *gentlemen*!" "Enduring love," he concluded, "is never a one-sided affair. If it is not double and mutual, heaven and earth, all human endeavour, should be practically brought into play to make it so."³³

The tragic failing of the sexology of his day, Randolph believed, was its failure to confront the fundamental differences - "mentally, socially, physically, aesthetically, physiologically, anatomically, magnetically, electrically, chemically, and mechanically" - between females and males, and a consequent tendency to recognize only an undifferentiated human sexual response, assuming that woman was "but a softer, finer, more delicate sort of man, or male," a conception he found to be "not only a grave mistake, but one that does her rank injustice."³⁴ Randolph located the fundamental cause of the sexual failure of marriages in male arrogance and lust, productive of "too great physical intimacy" and "magnetic exhaustion."³⁵ Like most of his contemporaries, Randolph believed that the female sex drive was weaker than the male, but that assumption served as the foundation for his critique of legalized male patriarchal privilege in conventional monogamic marriage. Natural sexuality, consistent with the sexologi-

cal model of gender-specific sexual response, he believed, led to the conclusion that,

our wives are as free of obligation to us as our mistresses. To bind them in the chains of duty agreeable only to *our* feelings is a crime and a profanation. To force or demand the consolations of love from one who cannot readily, freely, fully and wholly yield them to us, is sacrilege, and a crime against the divinity and majesty of the human soul. [...] No man has the right to exact the fulfillment of a promise obtained from a woman under the impression that she was beloved . . . To do so is to forfeit manhood - an act no true male can be capable of doing. True, it is done; but the doers are *Things*, not men!³⁶

But they fail in manhood as well who fail to satisfy the sexual desires of their wives, and in a sexual relationship grounded in "mutual consent," "every man who fails to husband his wife, but only brothers her, has no claim whatever upon her wifeness or wifely affections, but from that moment her lover unquestionably *has*!"³⁷ In conventional marriage, Randolph laid the responsibility for the sexual unfulfilment of women squarely on the selfishness, ineptitude, and inadequate sexual technique of men. And he found male sexual inadequacy widespread in his society. "The great majority of American wives never experience the full measure of conjugal bliss," he wrote.

Thousands of wives never knew the slightest sexual pleasure, because their husbands are premature, and the race of passion on their part is ended before that of the wife is fairly begun. The cause is plain - early private vice. The cure is simple: less haste, more love, less passion, cold-bathing, generous food, and protozone.³⁸

While not unique among Victorian sex theorists (the Oneida Community prioritized female orgasm while denying male climax in its practice of "male continence"), Randolph's conclusions from the presupposition that mutual pleasure is the primary rationale for sex paralleled those of the more seriously-minded sex radicals of the day. Thus, assumptions about human sexual response led to social prescriptions at odds with contemporary gender conventions.

But his ideas on sexuality were often wildly contradictory. While on the one hand he could off-handedly recommend sex education for children under the guise of teaching "anthropology in all its branches," and in strikingly modern terms urge men to get in touch with their female sides ("the truest man is he whose nature is more than half woman"), and despite his championing of female sexual equality, on the other hand he subscribed to quite conventional notions of gender identity. He advised women that "to be loved, she must be lovely, loveable, and must *love*." She should dress to suit her husband and imitate the allurements of the prostitute. As far as the contemporary women's movement and its quest for suffrage was concerned, he opined that "when a woman meddles with politics it is time to put your trust in God."³⁹

Casca Llanna, Randolph's most extended treatment of the sex instinct, while it gathers bits and pieces from his earlier writings together, contributes little that is new, theoretically or practically to his previous discussions of the topic. It is rambling and at times self-indulgent, and preoccupied with expressions of free love libertinage, many of which were of only historical interest by the time the work was published. Then, too, as a disquisition on sex, the text is muddled by his narration of an unhappy, obsessive, six-week love affair with a woman he identifies only as La Blondette. While this material would prove useful to the psycho-biographer, it is disingenuous of Randolph to claim, despite the appearance of most of the central themes of this text in his earlier writings, that the insights of this book were largely the result of this brief, one-sided relationship. Perhaps what Randolph intends here is to indirectly indicate to the reader why this text is so much more conservative in its tone than *Love and Its Hidden History*. Certainly, he is at pains early in the text to inform the reader that the book was

written in the direct interests of the conservative side of human society, and of the great impending reaction against the false and perilous notions of love, and social life, and polity, which now taint every breath we draw [...] it is essential to state that the book purposes to inaugurate that reaction and engage in a combat à l'outrance, with the

loose philosophers and philosophies, till they are driven to the wall, and virtue has a hearing, so long denied her.⁴⁰

Though he reiterates here his commitment to female sexual equality and to absolute right of choice in regard to intercourse within marriage, and condemns the male who dares trespass on those rights as a "human brute," who exhibits an "immortal piggitude," he parallels the selfish love of men under legal sanction with the selfish love of women under free conditions. There are strong overtones of distrust of the independent woman here, what Randolph seems to have learned from *La Blondette* is a more cynical attitude toward "*womanine* nature," that women, free from social restraint, would prove themselves "vampirial women," purveyors of "counterfeit love!" The autobiographical foundation of his jaundiced view of the feminine is clear in his conclusion that

in all matters directly or obliquely pertaining to the love-nature woman is not only more one-sided, but far more cruel than man, and as a dissembler of love can give him heavy odds and best him out of sight; so skillful can a woman become in this respect, that she is capable of deceiving the sharpest man alive, and making him believe . . . that she loves him to the borders of idolatry, when in fact she don't care a straw for, and just as like uses him for her own ends, and laughs at him in her sleeve. No man can break from a woman without a pang; but a woman will part from him, her love-kiss warm on his lips, and without a word of notice abandon him forever.⁴¹

In this text, Randolph reveals himself as no radical on gender equality in the social and political sphere, despite his insistence on female sexual equality. Randolph's views on women's rights were tinged with the distrust that accompanied his disappointed love affair. In fact, it led him to a wilful misconstruction of the women's rights movement that resulted in a reductionist conflation of that movement and the adherents of free love. While he champions woman as "the absolute equal of man" in the abstract and proclaims himself unopposed to women's rights, he decries "that specious system of Woman's Rightism, which proclaims free harlotage, the do-as-impulse-or-

interest promptism, and the right of murdering her unborn child, whether illegitimate or not."⁴² He claimed that divorces had increased by 50% since the advent of the women's movement because it "unfitted her for the place and position God himself assigned her."⁴³ Viewing the "so-called Women's Rights movements" through the lens of his own failed romantic adventure, he bristles at the implication that feminine affectional "martyrdom" is greater than the male's and that all the wrongs that destroy love are committed against women.⁴⁴

He inveighed against the activist woman, whom he found to be

all head; intellectual amazons, new-righties. [...] Never a gentle sweet emotion beams from their faces, or a warm feminine feeling lights up their eyes, eyes *so* cold they freeze you; marble women with granite hearts, and cast steel souls. [...] females without femininity; sexed, but only in appearance; eternally babbling frothy nothings about love which they practically know nothing of.⁴⁵

Such women, Randolph believed, had unsexed themselves. Though he did not deny their right to suffrage, he argued that "few men [...] are capable of really loving, even though they may *admire* a strong-minded woman - a *she* man; nor are such capable of inspiring the divine passion."⁴⁶ "Understand," he declared,

the right to vote if she wants it is not here denied her. [But] are not its chief advocates now either grannies in pantaloons, or what-is-its in crinoline? By no means, would the writer advocate the subjection of women; but rather, would grant them perfect equality on the middle grounds of life, but would insist that neither man nor woman should trench upon the spheres naturally existing as sex distinctions.⁴⁷

Randolph finally, in this text that he billed as his *magnum opus* on the sex question, declared in favor of sexual essentialism, sustaining the biological and physiological basis for the gender roles of his society. Randolph had consciously and directly alligned himself with the "true Christians and sensible conservatives" and against the "come-outers, radicals, athiests, Freedomites [...] or any species of ists, ites, or ologists whatever."⁴⁸ The degree to which the very differ-

ent tone, the recurrent attack on the free love movement and radical reformers, and the much more conventional social construction of sexuality may have derived from his brush with legal prosecution for the supposed obscenity of his earlier work cannot be definitively established, but it certainly cannot have failed to affect his next immediate foray into the public discourse on sexuality. The gospel of freedom in love to the "heartful" was basically control of sex by the rational will: "How shall we discipline the universal organ of amateness so that it shall not run riot in the land?," Randolph asked. His answer was conformity to the conservative conscience of America: "Free Love! No man is free who has not command over himself, but suffers his passions to control him."⁴⁹

Randolph produced a final volume in his exoteric sexology - *Eulis! The History of Love: Its Wondrous Magic, Chemistry, Rules, Laws, Modes, Moods, and Rationale; Being the Third Revelation of Soul and Sex* (1874). It presents a summary of his sexual theories and describes the power of mutual orgasm to create magnetic union of the couple. But Randolph's published works typically promised more than they delivered; in his esoteric works he provided the specifics of the practical dimensions of his sexology. The chief of these "private" works were: "The Mysteries of Eulis" (ca. 1860), *The Ansairctic Mystery. A "Private Letter," Printed But Not Published. It Being Sacred and Confidential* (ca. 1873), and *Magica Sexualis* (posthumous, 1931). He apparently also planned to publish a parallel piece to *The Ansairctic Mystery*, to be entitled *Sexagyma*, which was never published.⁵⁰

In "The Mysteries of Eulis," Randolph reveals "MAHICALINGA" - "the sexive principle of Eulis", which consists in the working of white magic towards specific goals through the medium of prayer during the act of sexual union. It requires a woman "with perfect sexive and orgasmic ability,"

for it requires a *double crisis* to succeed; no one can reach the power sought, or gain their special purpose unless they do so in the *coitive* act, or at the *exudive* moment of the woman, or the expulsive one of the man; which event should be simultaneous or as near as possible, because the mystic gates of the soul never open to admit the elements

of power, or send forth its magic working will, save for an instant *at that precise juncture*.⁵¹

The act of sexual union thus produces the conditions for magical transformation. Sexual intercourse is at once ritualized and sacralized, it is instrumental in channelling occult energies to invigorate the body, to order sexual relationships, to provide access to esoteric knowledge, and to evoke luck for financial schemes. Only the adept will understand the inner workings of this sexo-magical system, which, according to Randolph, requires a male sexual discipline unknown to contemporary marriage. For the Golden Gods require that if any man

*will for any power, from the moment of passing the outer door till the woman shall have expelled him, that will he reach. But Hell reigns in marriage land today, and its principle cause is that while still the spiritual semen is passing, he withdraws, still erect, and Hell takes hold at the very roots of their being, because they defy, annul, prostitute and disobey the very primary law of being - the great purpose underlying their very creation.*⁵²

Indeed, central to Randolph's esoteric sexology is mutual orgasm, and most especially that of the female. In *The Ansairctic Mysteries* he insists that the "Rejuvenescence Intensification and Sanctification of Love" depends upon it. But good sex is difficult, for

the vast majority of civilized men have no endurance, or *staying* qualities or powers; but are so very morbid - a result of prostatic inflammation - that their love journey is spasmodically ended long before that of the woman has fairly begun; and the *presence* is scarce achieved, ere the discharge takes place, whereupon - all rigidity ceases, and poor *she* is deprived of all the joy of marital union. . . . for if the female is not brought . . . by purely *legitimate* methods . . . to the natural sexual demise, the full and perfect *orgasm*, all love in her is curdled and soured, and all love *for* him appreciably diminished.⁵³

For perfect, healthful, conjugal love,

it is absolutely essential that the neck of the uterus be bathed in and by the husband's prostatic lymph and ejected semen *every time* they know each other; for unless their mutual acids and alkalis, generated then and there, meet, mingle, blend and fuse, the electro-magnetic and nervous conditions essential to perfect union are not present, and the reaction is fatal to health⁵⁴

Randolph comments here that contemporary American wives rarely "actualize the normal orgasm," though the sexes "have equal rights, and should have equal chances." The consequence of unfulfilled sexuality in the female is disordered, pathological sex organs, and the end of any prospect of marital bliss, for "the vagina, ovaria and uteri become disordered, inflamed, congested; and congested sex organs will transform an angel into its opposite, quicker than anything else."⁵⁵ As an antidote to sexual deadness, Randolph advocates the establishment of an institute, an adult "SCHOOL OF SEXUAL SCIENCE," to teach his principles of sexology, the attainment of magical power through orgasm, and especially "woman's *right* to orgasm" and the "universal Hogitude of what pass for husbands," who are unable or unwilling to serve as the means for her sexual fulfilment.⁵⁶

In the posthumously published *Magica Sexualis*, Randolph provides diagrams of the five primary positions a couple is to assume in the performance of erotic magic, one of the physical effects of which is the determination of the sex of the potential child. Sexual intercourse is also the means of charging magical mirrors and fluid condensers, may serve to animate pictures and statues or to provoke supernatural or spiritual visions, and helps to realize the particular desire of one or both partners. As such, it is a sacred ritual and must be cleansed of lust. Therefore, "lust for pleasure must not be the main purpose. Transcending carnal pleasure, aim at the union of the spirits," Randolph advises his acolytes, "if you want your prayer to be exhausted in ecstasy."⁵⁷

While Randolph was more graphically descriptive in his esoteric sexual works, his illustrations of the most effective sexual positions and his validation of the parity of male and female orgasm do not fundamentally alter the specifics of his exoteric sexology. He remains an

ambiguous figure in the history of American sex radicalism and sexology. His championing of the basic female right to orgasmic equality links him to the most advanced sex radicals of his time, while his social attitudes towards contemporary gender roles are essentialist and dreadfully conventional, as were his opposition to abortion and his distrust of artificial means of contraception. His advocacy of eugenics or stirpiculture linked him to the serious free-love tradition of his day, most especially to John Humphrey Noyes, Moses Harman, and Victoria Woodhull. Yet, his belief in the genetic "imprint" of the first father on a woman's successive children by different fathers was based on a crude biological revision of the ancient superstition about the mother's experiences during gestation, "marking" the child in the womb.

On the other hand, his sexology was very radical in Victorian America. He had a clear conception of the nature of human sexual response that he developed in a series of books on both the exoteric (popular) and the esoteric (arcane) level. In an elemental way, he moved toward a sense of the importance of sexual technique, particularly for the male, in the achievement of mutually satisfactory intercourse, and therein anticipated a major change in the conceptualization of the physical constituents of maleness in America - the transition from a generative to a performative model of male sexuality that would only be fully realized nearly a century after he wrote. His graphic illustrations also anticipated the sex manuals, as guidebooks for marital happiness would proliferate dramatically in the next century as well. Finally, his conceptualization of a sex institute, though but vaguely formulated late in his life, anticipates the scientific study of sex and the professional, institutionalized sex therapy of the twentieth century.

A man of volcanic passion and deep depression, who exalted sex to a magical sacrament, he may not have been "an out-and-out Radical"⁵⁸ in everything he did, but his sexology was radically in advance of contemporary views and attitudes of sexuality, and anticipated several of the central concerns and paradigms of modern sexuality. Though his works were often ambiguous and contradictory, his insistence on the central importance of female orgasm legitimated and prioritized sexual satisfaction through mutual orgasm and thus the pre-

dominance of a sexual economy of pleasure. Particularly in his more explicit magico-sexual tests, he endowed sex with a transformative power, a power that resided in and was effectuated through the sexual body.

And his discursive consideration of sexual technique, though rudimentary by later standards, provided a base of sexual knowledge that supported a divergent paradigm of the sexual body and its potential. If often inconsistent in his thinking and conventional in his social attitudes, his was a unique alternative voice in the sexual discourse of the period, and his thought, both as it embeds the commonplaces of sexuality of Victorian America and as it uproots the time-honored forms of sexual practice in subtly subversive ways, provides a unique introit to the discursive archeology of the sexual attitudes and sexual constructs of our own time.

Notes

¹ Paschal Beverly Randolph, *P.B. Randolph, the "Learned Pundit;" and "Man with Two Souls," His Curious Life, Works, and Career. The Great Free Love Trial. Randolph's Grand Defence. His Address to the Jury, and Mankind. The Verdict* (Boston: Randolph & Co., 1872), 16.

² See John P. Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosacrucian, and Sex Magician* (Albany: State U of NYP, 1997), 8, and 379 n. 41.

³ [Paschal Beverly Randolph], *The Guide to Clairvoyance, and the Clairvoyant's Guide: A Practical Manual for Those Who Aim at Perfect Clear Seeing and Psychometry; also a Special Paper Concerning Hashish, its Uses and Abuses, and Dangers, its Extasia, Fantasia, and Illuminati. Printed for People of Common Sense Only* (Boston: Rochelle & Rollins, 1867), 35-36.

⁴ On Spear, see Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 15-21, and Neil B. Lehman, *The Life of John Murray Spears: Spiritualism and Reform in Antebellum America* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1973).

⁵ Benjamin Hatch, *Spiritualists' Iniquities Unmasked and the Hatch Divorce Case* (New York: Benjamin Hatch, 1859), 14. This account of Randolph's early career is problematical and probably reflected. Hatch's desire to create a "poster boy" for reformed free lovers. The only wife he could be referring to here was Randolph's first, Mary Jane, whom he married in the 1850s and by whom he had three Children. But Randolph renounced free love doctrines in 1858 and did not separate from Mary Jane until 1860. They appear never to have been divorced. And Randolph's renunciation of Spiritualism in-

volved no religious conversion; in fact he had been baptized as a Catholic as a young boy. Hatch's association of Randolph with Christianity at this stage of his career probably derived from Randolph's public condemnation of Spiritualism as "anti-Bible, anti-God, anti-Christian," a profession of faith he made in a piece called "The Converted Medium," *New York Daily Tribune*, 25 November 1858: 3. See Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 92, and 425 n. 9.

⁶ Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 8-9, 173, and 206-207.

⁷ [Paschal Beverly Randolph], *Casca Llanna (Good News): Love, Women, Marriage: The Grand Secret! A Book for the Heartful* (Boston: Randolph Pub. Co., 1872), 21.

⁸ Paschal Beverly Randolph, *The Unveiling; or, What I Think of Spiritualism. To Which is Appended His World-Famous Medicinal Formulas* (Newburyport, MA: William H. Huse & Co., 1860), 10.

⁹ Randolph, *Casca Llanna*, 38-39. My emphasis.

¹⁰ Randolph, *Learned Pundit*, 89-90.

¹¹ Ibid, 2. That Randolph saw direct physiological and psychological connections between candy, sweets, and the erotic, was clear in the title of a lost pamphlet he published - *Will, Candy and Sugar, Their Effects on Amatoriness* (1872). See Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 359.

¹² Ibid, 7.

¹³ Ibid, 7-8. Randolph's brush with the law was minimal, though it was representative of a spirit of rising intolerance towards erotic expression that would culminate the following year in the passage of the Comstock Act and the forty-year period of vigorous harassment of sex radicals and prosecution by Anthony Comstock of obscene materials transmitted through the mails. William Hepworth Dixon was engaged in a libel suit against the *Pall Mall Gazette* for its charge that his two-volume work, *Spiritual Wives* was obscene. Victoria Woodhull spent a month in jail for her advocacy of free love in 1872. See Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 200. But these episodes were exceptionally mild in comparison to the dogged, brutal determination of Comstock to stamp out vice. His persecution of Ida Craddock forced her to commit suicide, and Moses Harman, editor of *Lucifer, the Light Bearer*, was imprisoned three times (at least once at hard labor in his seventies), and was hounded throughout his life by Comstock. These cases exemplify the severity of legal persecution that from the mid-1870s through the first decade of the twentieth century constituted a Comstockian reign of terror.

¹⁴ Ibid, 69.

¹⁵ Ibid, 7.

¹⁶ [Paschal Beverly Randolph], *The Ansaitic Mystery: A New Revelation Concerning SEX!* (unpublished, private letter [n.d., ca. 1873]). Reprinted as Appendix A to Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 311-326, p. 317.

¹⁷ For Randolph's use of the term "stirpiculture," see *Ansaitic Mystery*, 321. For the parallels between Randolph's and Noyes' ideas, see Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 28.

¹⁸ Randolph was a central figure in the creation of Rosicrucianism in America, but seems never to have subsumed his thought under the doctrines of that secret, magical order; rather, he used its inspiration to provide enhanced credibility to his own cosmology and to provide a foundation for the development and propagation of his system of sexual magic. Rosacrucianism did, however, provide rough parallels to Randolph's own thought. Its Triplicate Order, for instance, suggests Randolph's division of the universe into the three realms of the material, the spiritual, and the soul world. Randolph's disavowal of Rosacrucian orthodoxy and his essentially instrumental relationship to the formal order was frankly expressed in *Soul! The Soul World: The Homes of the Dead* (Boston: Randolph Pub. Co, 1872), 274-76. This work is also attributed to "The Rosacrucian." As an instance of Randolph's using Rosacrucianism to give additional weight to his own ideas, *Seership! The Magnetic Mirror. A Practical Guide to Those Who Aspire to Clairvoyance-Absolute* (Boston: Randolph Pub. Co., 1870), was advertised as *The Rosacrucian Handbook*. See Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 356.

¹⁹ [Paschal Beverly Randolph], *After Death; or, Disembodied Man. The World of Spirits; Its Location and Extent, Appearance; the Route Thither; Inhabitants; Customs; Societies; Also Sex and Its Uses There, etc., with Much Matter Pertinent to the Question of Human Immortality*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Author, 1868), 51. This work was intended as the sequel to *Dealings with the Dead*.

²⁰ Ibid, 51, and 53, respectively.

²¹ Ibid, 115.

²² Ibid, 116. Women desiring children "adopt" the newly deceased infants and nurture them until they can function independently in the spiritual world. Growth and maturation are also elements of Randolph's soul world.

²³ Ibid, 159-60.

²⁴ Ibid, 160.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 161. See also *Learned Pundit*, 89-90. On the Mohometan paradise, see *After Death*, 175-76.

²⁷ On the publishing history of *Love and Its Hidden History*, see Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 355.

²⁸ "Count St. Leon" [Paschal Beverly Randolph], *Love and Its Hidden History: Also, the Master Passion; or, the Curtain Raised on Woman, Love, and Marriage. Female Beauty; Its Attainment, culture, and Retention; with Hints for the Increase of Woman's Power. A Book for Women, Men, Husbands, and Lovers, for the Loving, the Unloved, and the Yearning Ones of the World*, 5th ed. (Boston: Randolph & Co., 1870), 20-21.

²⁹ Ibid, 22. But at times Randolph subscribes to orthodox spermatic economy doctrine. Loss of vitality affected women as well as men, and Randolph underscored its debilitating effect by observing that if loss of an ounce of blood were set at 1, loss of an ounce of semen was 61, and loss of an ounce of prostatic fluid (or female vaginal "lochia") was 211 times as weakening. See *Master Passion*, 146. Alternatively, he denies that loss of semen or "lochia" was responsible for most exhaustion. Rather it was caused by the body's loss of the power to manufacture protoplasm, the source of nervous energy that sustained a healthy balance of mental and physical forces. See Ibid, 65-66. Randolph's primary medical specialization was the maintenance of nervous balance and the treatment of what would later be called neurasthenia or the nervous breakdown. See Ibid, 39.

³⁰ Ibid, 121. See also p. 35, where Randolph describes vampires as "human sponges," who "draw the precious fluid of life from all with whom they come in contact."

³¹ Ibid, 102. The "crime against nature" phrase is from *Master Passion*, 94. Randolph lists seven forms of unnatural sexual vice in this text - "self-abuse, concubinage, promiscuity, 'free love,' celibacy, excess, and sodomy" (138). He generally opposed "artificial" means of contraception, and in addition to the proper timing of intercourse recommended only abstinence. See *Love and Its Hidden History*, 118-20, and 31.

³² Randolph, *Love and Its Hidden History*, 114-15.

³³ Randolph, *Master Passion*, 12.

³⁴ Randolph, *Love and Its Hidden History*, 98. See also p.34. On the imbalance of male and female sexual response, see p.37.

³⁵ Ibid, 131.

³⁶ Randolph, *Master Passion*, 112-13. On the weaker female sex drive, see *Love and Its Hidden History*, 52.

³⁷ Randolph, *Master Passion*, 113.

³⁸ Randolph, *Love and Its Hidden History*, 117, and *Master Passion*, 133-34, respectively. On mutual orgasm and the mingling of sexual fluids (semen

and the vaginal secretion, "lochia"), see *Master Passion*, 131. Protozone was a hashish-based compound that Randolph sold throughout his medical career to restore sexual energy and to cure "prostatic and seminal exhaustion," impotence, and general "sexual debility." See *The New Mola! The Secret of Mediumship. A Book of White Magic, Magnetism, and Clairvoyance. The New Doctrine of Mixed Identities* (Toledo, OH: Author, 1873), 40, and 41.

³⁹ On children's sex education, see *Master Passion*, 94; on males assuming feminine characteristics, see *Ibid*, 13. On the "true woman's" need to be loveable, see *Hidden History*, 32; on imitation of prostitutes, see *Ibid*, 61. On opposition to abortion and parental support of bastards, see *Seership! The Magnetic Mirror. A Practical Guide to Those Who Aspire to Clairvoyance-Absolute* (Toledo, OH: K.C. Randolph, 1892), 30-31. Randolph's vehemence on abortion and support of illegitimate children no doubt derived from the deep pain and sense of rejection he felt over his own unhappy childhood experience. For Randolph's out-of-hand rejection of female suffrage, see *Master Passion*, 11.

⁴⁰ Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Casca Llanna (Good News): Love, Woman, Marriage: The Grand Secret! A Book for the Heartful*, 4th ed. (Boston: Randolph Pub. Co., 1872), 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid*. 12. Cf. Randolph's claim that there were ten times as many female as male vampires, *Ibid*, 84. Given Randolph's pains to conceal his African-American heritage and to "pass" in white society (he was perhaps most often described as an octoroon in the contemporary press, though occasionally considered "a Spaniard"), he was doubtless stung to the quick by La Blondette's preference of "a black, ignorant, stupid negro," "a thick-lipped woolly-headed lover" to himself (*Ibid*, 26). Elements of racial pride and paranoia, and indeed prejudice, seem to have colored his view of the La Blondette affair, and to have directly conditioned his distrust of the feminine expressed in the text. The quotes on male selfishness in marriage may be found in *Ibid*, 45-46, 144, 170, 191, and 254. He continued to vigorously support the sexual mutuality of marriage and women's sexual rights within that sphere. See *Ibid*, 383. The predatory sexuality of the "free woman" is detailed in *Ibid*, 15-16, and 20.

⁴² *Ibid*, 28.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 246-47.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 118.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 314. Randolph's conception of binary-gendered sexuality as the essence of personal identity was graphically depicted in his discussion of the

condition of the eunuch. See Ibid, 162. As he commented elsewhere, "the entire being is dependent upon the condition of the love-system of either sex," i.e., the sex organs and their liquid, electrical, and magnetic emanations. See Ibid, 145.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 247.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 377.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 154, and 168, respectively.

⁵⁰ See Deveney, Paschal Beverly Randolph, 367.

⁵¹ "The Mysteries of Eulis," in Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 327-41, 338.

⁵² Ibid, 340.

⁵³ Randolph, *Ansairctic Mystery*, in Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 311-16, 311-12.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 312.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 313.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 319, 314, and 315, respectively.

⁵⁷ Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Sexual Magic* (New York: Magickal Child Pub. Co., 1988), 47.

⁵⁸ *Ansairctic Mystery*, 317, and *Learned Pundit*, 7.

Little White Sheep, or How I Learned to Dress Blue

Paul Lauter

In its first form, this paper was a talk I gave for the Yale Women's Center. My most recent prior association with the University happened about two years before, when I joined the Yale contingent in New York's 1992 Gay Pride march; the chant of the day, thanks to Dan Quayle as I recall, was: "We're here, we're queer, and we can spell potato." A little earlier that spring I had spoken at a graduate student union organizing conference in New Haven. Before that, I had had no relation to the University for a decade. In 1982, I had organized an Institute at Yale in connection with the Reconstructing American Literature project, from which eventually emerged the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*.¹ Between that time and, working backward, my commencement in 1958, I think I had been at the University three times: once on the first day of my older son's undergraduate career, once at the end of that time, and once to attend a meeting of Resist, a group I had helped organize in 1967 to support draft resistance and which now funds forms of radical organizing. So I had been a father, an activist, an outside agitator, an advocate for cultural change "at" or around Yale, but never, since I left William Clyde DeVane's classroom in 1956, a speaker or writer at the University.

All of which leads me - it may seem obscurely, at first - to the central theme I want to examine. It is more easily formulated in a metaphor than in a phrase: how does institutional culture act as a blinder to limit - indeed control - an enactment of these and other roles? I will argue, in fact, that my 1950s education, good as it was in certain respects, fundamentally incapacitated me, in ways I have only recently begun to understand, from performing many of the roles I have - and have not - taken up. What this essay recounts, however, are the costs of the benefits of that fine Yale education.

When I walked out from the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Fifth Street to fall in behind the blue and white banner in June of 1992, one of the first people to speak to me was a reporter with a

small tape machine who wanted to know what things were like in New Haven during the fifties. He was, of course, asking about sexuality, and I responded in kind. But lurking in my thoughts as we spoke was rather a different issue, one addressed in amazing detail by William Epstein in an article that appeared in *ELH* in 1990. Epstein's piece, "Counter-Intelligence: Cold-War Criticism and Eighteenth-Century Studies," concerns criticism, scholarship, and personnel at Yale and in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the decades just before, during, and after the Second World War - or the Yale-CIA connection. Now it might seem quite odd, indeed, that I would find eighteenth-century studies at Yale more compelling than sex, but I have to tell you that first reading Epstein's piece on a plane to Chicago brought tears to my eyes. And since I am not in the habit of crying over articles in *ELH*, I had to think about why. Perhaps it was the shock of the Midwest at noon or retracing my 1953 wedding journey to Chicago. But I have come to feel that it was something deeper, something akin to the shame and rage of being told "that is not it at all," something, in fact, having to do with class but also with sex and power. I thought I had known what I was about in coming to Yale in 1955, and what Yale was about in educating me. I found in reading Epstein that I had known nothing about it at all, "that was not it at all."

Or, rather, that I had so naturalized the processes of my education that after some thirty years of radical activism, in and out of academe, I had not fully grasped the character of what and how I was taught. I do not want to attribute this failure simply to my naiveté and ignorance, though both no doubt played a main role. But I think it is also true that if one comes from a culture which prizes learning and thus the educational processes which are taken to produce it, one has few defenses against the claims educational institutions make that they are, in truth, leading you out of darkness into (the) enlightenment. And few groups were as committed to the value(s) of education as upwardly mobile Jews in the twentieth century. Yet in some degree all educational institutions function rather in the manner symbolized by Ralph Ellison in his depiction of the statue of "the Founder" in *Invisible Man*. Kneeling before the Founder is a young man with a veil over his eyes; the Founder grasps the lower corners of the veil in his fin-

gers. But it cannot be told, Ellison writes, whether he is in the process of lifting it from the eyes of the kneeling student or lowering it "more firmly in place." So, I found myself reflecting after reading Epstein's article, with my Yale education: to what did it open my vision and what did it keep me, over decades, from seeing?

Epstein makes three large points. First, Yale, particularly English and American Studies, was a fruitful ground for recruiting personnel to the OSS and later to its successor, the CIA. This much was relatively familiar to readers of the *New York Times Magazine*. Epstein's second point concerned the way in which the methods devised by that hub of scholarly activity, the Walpole factory, for gathering, organizing, and retrieving information modeled those used by the OSS and ultimately the CIA. But it was his third point which gripped and moved me. That concerned the ways in which the Yale English department, and particularly the study of eighteenth-century literature, played a critical role in organizing and deploying a version of cold-war culture that, I think it is fair to say, deeply shaped the values and ways of thinking of most of us who moved through its program of study. As Epstein frames it:

That this academic period specialty could be so readily and nearly effortlessly recruited into the national political campaign against domestic subversion and the secret war of counter-intelligence against alien infiltration is not only a sign of the times, a reflection of prevailing cultural attitudes, but also a remembrance of things past, a refraction of the early days of American participation in World War II. For this is when the American academy in general and eighteenth-century historical scholarship and the New Criticism in particular helped to establish the intelligence operations that were to radically reorganize knowledge and restructure analysis in both the state and the academy, thus forming (to use the title of one of Gray's unfinished poems) "The Alliance of Education and Government" that came to dominate post-War American culture. As we shall see, this alliance of textual politics between traditional (non-Marxist) historical scholarship and the New Criticism, a critical confederacy that sponsored nominally non-ideological, apolitical modes of literary study, was not merely a convenient shelter for American academics during a period of cultural

suppression . . . but, in fact, had already been an active participant in shaping the world-view that enabled and abetted the Cold War.²

"Cold-War Culture" was not, of course, the product of any single group; nor were its forms identical. The "New York Intellectuals" took a somewhat different route from that of New Haven - or Cambridge, Berkeley, or Missoula - academics.³ Still, what emerged in the decade after World War II was a particular way of understanding ourselves, the world we inhabited, the culture we analyzed and taught - as well as just who constituted that imperial "we." It was not a way that appeared to most of us malign, or even very narrow; rather, it came to seem as natural as charcoal-broiled steaks, the two-child family, Levittown, or the New Criticism. I yoke these cold-war phenomena together not to construct a metaphysical gag, much less to derogate my teachers - those, like Cleanth Brooks, who formulated the tactics of close reading and the cultural strategy of narrowing one's options it underwrote. Rather, I want to suggest how cold-war culture exercised control at once over our personal lives and our conceptions of professional work; indeed, in forging that link - and in making the bond invisible to us - lay its power.

I can be more specific by using, as an example of the problems cold-war culture produced, my own work over the last 25 years on *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. But it may be useful first to say something about the person who first arrived in New Haven almost 40 years ago, driving a brown, 1949 Hudson and hauling a queer assortment of cultural baggage. I had been married a few days prior to my twenty-first birthday two years before and had spent the intervening time getting a Master's degree from that quintessentially New Critical outpost, the School of Letters, by then at Indiana University in Bloomington. The quite welcome opportunity to go to Yale derived, in part, from my then-wife's pursuit of what would become a career as a Russian historian. In other respects we had a not-atypical 1950s marriage: in marrying, we had done what had become expected and so, more or less in the words of e.e. cummings (one of the few poets I then genuinely liked and knew), we "sowed [our] isn't [we] reaped [our] same." My 150-page Master's thesis was on Whitman,

concentrating on his "Children of Adam" and "Calamus" poems, the manuscripts of which I had carefully examined at the Library of Congress during a hot Eisenhower summer. The thesis insisted:

"To Whitman came the terrible realization that what he had to have was not merely the respect or admiration, not only the friendship, but the love of those to whom he was drawn; that the meeting of eyes could not be casual, and that a smile must have the personal, secret meaning of lovers."⁴

To which I had added a footnote insisting upon the importance of distinguishing "between urge and practice," "twentieth-century psychological abstractions" like "homosexual" and "nineteenth-century realities." I had also read much of what I could find outside Indiana University's Kinsey Institute (to which it seemed somehow risky to request access) on the psychology of sexual definition, a matter of increasing concern to me, among other reasons, because I knew I would shortly face the Selective Service questionnaire that asked in essence, whether I was then or had ever been a practicing homosexual. The Korean war had begun on my eighteenth birthday, and the army of James Jones and Norman Mailer seemed to me more frightening than exposing my callowness and ignorance, as I surely did every day in class and out, or even qualifying as 4-F for somewhat veiled reasons.

Indiana University, I should add, was neither then (nor now) an alternative home for New York progressives, like Wisconsin or, later, the University of Michigan. Nor would I claim that I was then an activist, or indeed particularly political. The personal and the political had not yet been perceived as two faces of the same coin, and in my personal life I sang a worried song. True, I had joined the NAACP in 1949 and, in my knee-length one-button lounge suit with low-slung key-chain, had been among those attending the opening of Bop City. In fact, bop was my music of choice, civil liberties my politics, the *New Republic's* TRB (how are the mighty fallen) the arbiter of my civic values. But coming to Yale in 1955 I was a scared and underprepared Jewish kid, quite recently from New York, who generally knew the right hand from the left but who, when it came to religion, culture, or sexuality, saw darkly if at all. Above all else, I was divided: the

serious business of life, which I was beginning to perform by learning to profess literature, had little or nothing to do with what I enjoyed or valued - like Bird or Bechet, preparing potato kugle, and the struggle against discrimination as exemplified by Jackie Robinson.

I record these details of confusion partly to register the obligatory "before" portrait, the 90-pound cultural weakling, on whom the intellectual Charles Atlas of a great university would work its transformation. But more, I want to emphasize that my experience, despite such singularities as it had, reflected what was then happening in many white ethnic families at the upper margins of the working class: we were, of course, being offered the grand opportunity to assimilate,⁵ to step, as was to be my case, from Washington Heights through Sterling Library to Sanborn House on the Dartmouth campus in Hanover, New Hampshire. To stay behind in that upward march would have been, well. . . disloyal. And at some level of consciousness we all knew what that might mean - look what had become of the Rosenbergs.⁶

Let me now leap forward two decades to discover myself at work on *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*.⁷ Like every other anthology, the *Heath* implicitly and explicitly offers narratives about the development of American culture. One would expect that a canon-revising text like the *Heath* would provide equally revisionist accounts of cultural history, and in many respects as editors we do. Volume II, for example, used to begin with a late nineteenth-century section called "The Development of Women's Narratives"; it included writers like Rebecca Harding Davis, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and Pauline Hopkins, and it suggested a set of issues common to their texts. By foregrounding these women writers and the tensions about domesticity and work, sphere and power, race and gender with which they are concerned - and thus in a degree displacing the texts, like "The Open Boat" and "Editha," which traditionally marked late nineteenth-century American literature - the *Heath* offers something of a revisionist view of the development of narrative in that time. Similarly, we tried to complicate the usual story about the New England basis for American culture by beginning with Native American and

Spanish texts as the originary tales of "American" letters. And we underlined the significance of African-American authors in "American" literature both by vastly expanding the number of black writers included - like Frances Harper, Charles Chesnutt, and Pauline Hopkins - and broadening the selections we used. We also tried to emphasize the idea that in every historical period there are conflicting ideas of what is culturally valuable, and that conflict among cultural narratives is an enduring phenomenon in any society, especially one as diverse as ours.

Nevertheless, when we came to what we call the "Modern Period: 1910-1945," in many respects we simply reified the dominant narrative of "modernism." For example, that cultural movement was itself effectively defined in the first edition of the *Heath* by the continued dominion of certain familiar writers and particular texts - Faulkner, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," "Prufrock" - contained in the unit titled "Alienation and Literary Experimentation," central to the Modern Period. And it was given even greater weight by such seemingly minor details as the previous unit's title: "Toward Modernism." Furthermore, that key section on "Alienation and Literary Experimentation" was begun with a selection from Ezra Pound, in itself a symbol of what and whom the section was about. Edna St. Vincent Millay, seven years younger than Pound, concluded the previous "Toward Modernism" section, as if to say that her poetry represents an earlier, transitional mode, en route to "high" modernism. Amy Lowell appeared nowhere, a fact I will return to later; here I just wish to emphasize that whatever one thinks of Lowell's poetry, she certainly offered one alternative to the influence of Pound. Pound also came before Gertrude Stein and William Carlos Williams, both older, which again suggested that what Pound stands for takes priority by virtue either of gender or of a theory about what constitutes modernism. One more telling detail: the only prose statements of "theory" were those by Pound and Eliot - as if everyone else simply sung their "native woodnotes wild" without theoretical consideration. Subsequent editions complicated this narrative somewhat - by, for example, adding Lowell directly *after* Pound and adding a "sheaf of political poetry"

right in the middle of the still-central section called "Alienation and Literary Experimentation" - but did not, finally, displace it.

To be sure, the selection within the framework of "Modernism" is wider, more diverse with respect particularly to gender, than that provided by previous anthologies. Moreover, we consciously separate out the "New Negro Renaissance," in part as an effort to suggest the importance of a cultural movement alternative in many ways to the dominantly white (and often explicitly racist) modernism of Pound, Eliot, and their compatriots. All the same, the narrative of the Modern period constructed in the *Heath* - albeit somewhat more equivocally - maintained the centrality of an established version of modernism. What it did not do is deconstruct the continuing hegemony of that narrative within American literary studies.

Nor should that be surprising when one considers the centrality of the modernist narrative to the value and status of what editors and professors of literature actually do. Historically, the formalist strategies which have constituted the intellectual and pedagogical core of our profession grew in response to the complex, allusive, symbolic artistic practices of writers like Eliot as well as to his success in articulating and arguing for an aesthetic theory which privileged that practice. Eliot's theory - enunciated most clearly in his canon-establishing essay "The Metaphysical Poets" - and Eliot's practice (and I am using him here to symbolize a cultural movement), initially codified in the work of the New Criticism, rationalized our professional status, our value as interpreters and validators of certain forms of culture. Sustaining the received version of modernism at the center of our narrative was thus implicated in the processes by which we had established and maintained our professional standing (a term rather too often transmuted into the word "standards").

I want to be clear here that I am not attributing bad faith or critical inadequacy to my fellow editors. Quite the contrary, I am trying to articulate the boundaries of my own practice; I doubt that anyone on the *Heath* editorial board had been so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of New Criticism as I, whose formative study was, as I have indicated, with Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, and others at Indiana and at Yale in the 1950's. What I am trying to capture is just

how hard it is to escape our cultural training and to move from what we have been taught to do to what we have discovered needs doing. It is hard precisely because education, at least as I experienced it and as Ellison's metaphor suggests, took away with one hand what it offered with another, or more accurately opened a path to authority by foreclosing autonomy, enabled me to walk upright into the world as a professional by clothing me in a jacket, quite straight, of Harris tweed.

Coming to Yale in 1955, still a green and anxious New York boychick, I, too, knelt at the seat of power; I, too, received instruction in what to see and what not to see. I learned that Edith Wharton was a second-class James, that Ellison and Baldwin between them expressed whatever I really needed to know about Negro life, that "communist literature" was a contradiction in terms, and that a patrician detachment constituted the basis of that *maturity* necessary for the professional study of literature. Bits of this abbreviated litany I was aware of learning. What is deeply sad, and what produced my distress at reading Epstein's article, was how consciously unaware I became of what I was, in fact, so deeply aware of. I learned ignorance, so to speak - and to accept as the inevitable workings of nature the division I experienced between my own hopes and desires and others' expectations. And I was defenseless, I think, because I had no competing theory with which to test the cultural narratives so persuasively articulated and behaviorally demonstrated to me. My only test was this: what did I have to learn - translated, how did I have to act? - to insure a future in this profession, indeed in this country?

I want now to tease out somewhat more explicitly two of the strands which bound me so tightly to the program of my cultural socialization. One has to do with psychological structures, the other with theoretical paradigms, indeed with the question of what counts as "theory." An explicitly weighty question in academic circles nowadays, that issue has always in fact been deeply significant. In the 1940s and 1950s Yale was one of the critical sites in which was being established the hegemony of that paradigmatic form of cold-war culture, the New Criticism. The New Criticism developed, codified, and translated into classroom practice theoretical positions staked out by

Eliot and Pound, among others.⁸ It also played a significant role in repressing theoretical alternatives - most obviously, of course, those charged with the politics of the Left; and also, in fact, those posed by African-American critics, like Sterling Brown. Less obvious, perhaps, was the metamorphosis of the political conservatism of New Criticism's founders into the cold-war liberalism which dominated the fifties. "The critic is characteristically portrayed in *The Verbal Icon*," that quintessentially Yale, New Critical text - and here I am returning to William Epstein -

as a Cold-War liberal - the encircled, non-ideological defender of the vital center's middle style against the cunning plot of an evil enemy, whose central combat aim is to take over our words, to thrust a knife in the dark that will induce us to betray ourselves out of our engaged neutrality and into a riotously passionate polemical style that will distort our democratic countenance. . . . [S]uch a rhetorical strategy, regardless of its partisan political orientation, is a nearly inevitable consequence of the language of Cold-War politics. There is almost always a threat of alien subversion, a cunning plot driven by extremist ideology that is destroying American democracy from within. The battle is characteristically over language, over the control of the emotive import of words. (p. 76)

As a teacher I was deeply shaped by the linguistic preoccupations of this New Critical outlook as well as by what I have come to call its "pedagogical canon." By "pedagogical canon" I do not mean the "primary texts" - as we used to call them - selected for classroom study, for this canon has indeed, especially in American literature, been significantly modified. I refer, rather, to the still-dominant modes for reading and analyzing literary works, especially in the schools, and to the critical texts of the Eliotic/New Critical tradition that lie behind and validate these practices. As I have suggested, "The Metaphysical Poets," Mr. Eliot's canonical service, may stand here as a theoretical icon of our profession throughout the mid-century.

Few essays demonstrate so explicitly the process of canon formation, critical to consolidating cultural or social power in a contested terrain. Here Eliot invokes the authority of a particular set of texts -

those predominantly of the Elizabethan dramatists and the metaphysical poets - which he presents as constituting the main "current of [English] poetry." He maps deviations from that mainstream in Milton and Dryden, the lost meanderings of that current in Romantic and Victorian England, and its implicit reemergence in the complex texts of high modernism. He offers a supposedly historical rationale - the "dissociation of sensibility" that mysteriously afflicted 17th-century intellectuals - for relegating writers like Shelley and Tennyson to the literary Apocrypha. And he provides a set of standards with which to judge contemporary aspirants to inclusion in that main tradition: the poet, he insists, is no "ordinary man," but a person whose refined "sensibility," marked by "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling," enables him to amalgamate "disparate experience."

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.⁹

Eliot's terms here are remarkably *psychological* rather than aesthetic: "sensibility" as distinct from "sentiment," associative in thought rather than merely proficient in "literary" technique, personal "maturity" as the final measure of *poetic* value.

I have rehearsed these undoubtedly familiar details precisely because I wish to foreground the central correlation of a particular artistic style - the consistent association of disparate experience, the maintenance of contradictions in tension - with a particular idea of psychological maturity. This emotional correlation helps to explain the persistence of the forms of teaching the Eliotic tradition generated, even as the textual canon which he helped establish has increasingly been problematized. If one accepts this linkage, what we teach is not merely a form of analyzing literary art, but the path to maturity.¹⁰ By adopting and promulgating this linkage, we insure at once the rewards

of professional success and our own inner stability; the New Critical paradigm thus becomes not only an analytic and pedagogical tool, but a psychic gyroscope in a professional world forever calling our value into question. No wonder, then, that the commitment of literary academics to the Eliotic/New Critical pedagogical canon feels rather like the stake of the child in its determinative parent. Indeed, it is hard otherwise to explain the slightly hysterical attachment to the Eliotic "sensitivity" evident among many colleagues of middle years. To be sure, once such paradigms are established, the strong momentum of educational and publishing institutions joins not only our investments in what we know how to do but also how we learn to please to keep them in place long after their usefulness - as with our health-care and corporate accounting systems - has been fatally compromised. Poets might dally with "Uncle Ez," but critics and teachers of the fifties came to recognize Eliot as the "onlie begetter" of their enterprise.

And Eliot was a hard parent: he exacted cultural homage not only in his display of learning, in the authoritative voice that could speak in "The Metaphysical Poets" of "our civilization" without stuttering, but in the very structure of his critical discourse, which offered little basis for argument with what were, finally, *ex cathedra* though ever-so-urbane judgments. Most of all, however, coding these qualities of style as expressions of personal maturity invests them with intense power, especially among those lately come into this white Protestant gentleman's profession. On the other hand, to describe this exercise not as "maturity" but as a limited - and limiting - partisan stance, as Epstein does, calls into question more than the weight of a literary tactic but the keystone of a whole cultural edifice.

What I have been calling the Eliotic "pedagogical canon" remains compelling. One result, I think, is how my students, almost uniformly, regard poetry as a code for which another, observably more "mature" person - the teacher - has the only correct key. They are right, of course: if the close formal analysis of reputable texts constitutes the central task of the literature classroom, then students at virtually any level will feel powerless before the skills and intertextual knowledge of the instructor, and his ability to balance, indeed sustain, contradictions. One could argue, in fact, that teaching powerlessness is

a main point of what I have come to call "theoretical correctness." Theoretical correctness is, among other things, a move to dehistoricize values, including those grouped in the category of "aesthetics." To be sure, every poetic theory parades in the cloak of universality: poetry is [always] thus-and-so - "emotion recollected in tranquility"; "not metres, but a metre-making argument"; "not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion." But 1950s theorists were, like their conservative heirs today, peculiarly insistent on posing their ideas of value not against competing ideas but against politics and ideology altogether. Indeed, Daniel Bell proclaimed that the "end of ideology" was at hand, and the "vital center," the "liberal imagination," and similar constructions of social and cultural value were offered as permanent bulwarks of democracy against which successive tides of ideologically-driven totalitarianisms had worn, and would forever continue to wear, themselves out. Here, Eliot's emphasis on the weight of tradition and the ability of that - singular - tradition to accommodate, if ever so slightly, "the really new" echoed powerfully. The complaint that that tradition embodied a racist and sexist hierarchy could be dismissed as special pleading; the notion that the tradition was class bound could be derogated as a piece of ideology; and the criticism that the tradition's canon omitted more of interest than it embraced could be waved off as an immature fantasy.

In pedagogical practice, moreover, what theoretical correctness communicates is this: the universe of cultural knowledge is fixed, displayed in a received set of texts, the contents of which need only be transmitted from apostle to novice. I cannot imagine a more crippling pedagogical stance, nor one more guaranteed to place Oedipal dread at the psychic center of the classroom. But then again, from the perspective of cold war acculturation, is not just that the point? For dreading the "riotous" and committed, the slide from the posture of irony to the embrace of passion, was precisely the psychic bridge between Washington Heights and Sanborn House.

Let me embrace thee, Dread,
Queen and consort of my Days.

Reflecting on the experience of editing the *Heath* I have described - especially some years ago as we approached a revised second edition and I was scheduled to teach a course on modernisms - it seemed to me important to try rehistoricizing Eliot's theoretical ideas, asking more persistently not so much about the truth in some abstract universe of his notions of tradition, the "dissociation of sensibility," or "amalgamating disparate experience," but about the functions these ideas served in the moments of their deployment. Against what conceptions of poet, audience, language, and function was the modernism they defined arrayed? Indeed, what defined modernism - or even modernisms?¹¹ While theories are erected as permanent explanations of human phenomena, they do in fact serve local, historically specific functions. Such considerations brought me, disobedient at last, to Amy Lowell and Sterling Brown. I began to locate in them certain alternatives to the psychological structures and theoretical paradigms that had in my experience proved so compelling; they seemed to provide access for me to a world which, so to speak, preexisted my New Haven, and in these final sections I want to suggest why.

I do not wish to overstate certain similarities between them: the long neglect of their large bodies of critical writing, for example, their interest in the commonplace and the concrete, their commitment to poetry as performance, and the utter marginalization of their verse. Their theories of poetry - often embedded *in* poetic texts - contested Eliot's and may be seen still to do so, in ways at once different from and interestingly related to the critiques mounted by feminists and poststructuralists, among others, in recent years. Their theories, likewise, lead to distinctive reading strategies and therefore, potentially, to differing classroom practices. With all their quite evident differences, Lowell and Brown may also, by playing the role of absent "other," offer some useful alternative ways of thinking about fifties literary study and its discontents. I will not here discuss Lowell—I have done so at length elsewhere¹²—except to point to her notable absence even from the literary histories told by most feminist and lesbian critics, and the peculiarly harsh way in which she was attacked both during her life and for most of the 80 years since, which I attribute to her boundary-challenging qualities, her ways of bringing into questions

gender assumptions and borders. Lowell's poetic practice, with its exhibition and masquerade, its very public display cloaking its private danger, its enactment of the struggle between concealment and revelation, seems to me to "present" with accuracy the closeted subject position from which she came to speak. Further, her performances in poetry and in person of gender ambiguity and sexual marking, her play with existing definitions, stand in useful contrast to the efforts of male high modernists to define and patrol sex and gender boundaries.¹³ No wonder, then, that by the 1950s, a decade notable for its boundary hysteria, Lowell had been relegated to a domain beyond contempt: the secondary-school textbook.

In the 1950s, Sterling Brown had not a place even in that domain, not surprisingly since he insists upon the political dimension of poetry. Like Lowell, he wishes us to "hear" texts, though the voices he orchestrates, "invisible" to the usual audiences for poetry, differ sharply from the *sotto voce* of Lowell's speakers. Brown is concerned with performance, the sound and the impact of the speaking or singing voice, and consequently with audience. The focus on audience leads, in turn, to questions about the functions of those forms of speaking designated as poetry or song. Who does them? Who listens? Why? And in what tongues? And, underlying these questions, a project critical to Brown throughout his life: reassembling the cultural worlds represented as sharply divided between "high" and "popular," or, in my personal life, the domain of literature from the terrain of bop.

Brown's critical essays continually return to these issues: the small size and divided outlook of the black writer's primary audience;¹⁴ the capacity of "dialect, or the speech of the people," to express "whatever the people are";¹⁵ the power of oral folk expression to inspire and direct written art. But to state his concerns in this abstract and generalized way is, I think, to miss the historical embeddedness, the social and personal function of Brown's criticism. From his 1929 review of "unhistoric" histories by Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Claude Bowers, among others,¹⁶ to his 1953 comments on the transplantation of African-American folk art to the city,¹⁷ Brown's objective is not to pose a transcendent theory of art but to use criticism

to gain visibility and cultural space for black people in changing historical contexts, and to validate the creativity of black performative and folk culture. For as he and the other editors of *The Negro Caravan* (1941) comment, "creative literature has often been a handmaiden to social policy."¹⁸

His poem celebrating "Ma Rainey" embodies much of his theoretical stance:

I

When Ma Rainey
Comes to town,
Folks from anyplace
Miles aroun',
From Cape Girardeau,
Poplar Bluff,
Flocks in to hear
Ma do her stuff;
Comes flivverin' in,
Or ridin' mules,
Or packed in trains,
Picknickin' fools. . . .
That's what it's like,
Fo' miles on down,
To New Orleans Delta
An' Mobile town,
When Ma hits
Anywheres aroun'.

II

Dey comes to hear Ma Rainey from de little river settlements,
From blackbottom cornrows and from lumber camps;
Dey stumble in de hall, jes a-laughin' an' a-cacklin',
Cheerin' lak roarin' water, lak wind in river swamps.
An' some jokers keeps deir laughs a-goin' in de crowded aisles,
An' some folks sits dere waitin' wid deir aches an' miseries,
Till Ma comes out before dem, a-smilin' gold-toofed smiles
An' Long Boy ripples minors on de black an' yellow keys.

III

O Ma Rainey,
 Sing yo' song;
 Now you's back
 Whah you belong,
 Git way inside us,
 Keep us strong. . . .

O Ma Rainey,
 Li'l an' low;
 Sing us 'bout de hard luck
 Roun' our do';
 Sing us 'bout de lonesome road
 We mus' go. . . .

IV

I talked to a fellow, an' the fellow say,
 "She jes' catch hold of us, somekindaway.
 She sang Backwater Blues one day:

*'It rained fo' days an' de skies was dark as night,
 Trouble taken place in de lowlands at night.*

*'Thundered an' lightened an' the storm begin to roll
 Thousan's of people ain't got no place to go.*

*'Den I went an' stood upon some high ol' lonesome hill,
 An' looked down on the place where I used to live.'*

An' den de folks, dey natchally bowed dey heads an' cried,
 Bowed dey heavy heads, shet dey moufs up tight an' cried,
 An' Ma lef' de stage, an' followed some de folks outside."

Dere wasn't much more de fellow say:
 She jes' gits hold of us dataway.¹⁹

The poem begins by describing Ma Rainey's audience by geography (Cape Girardeau, Poplar Bluff), class ("blackbottom cornrows,"

"lumber camps"), and range of feelings. Its initial move, that is, is to establish the particular community in which this artist's work will be received. Furthermore, the poem ends by focusing on the transformed social relationships *in* the reception of the art-work: in the beginning, Ma "comes out before dem" as performer; at the end, she "lef' de stage, an' followed some de folks outside" as one who shares their lives. Here, as elsewhere, Brown emphasizes the continuity - rather than Eliot's romanticized discrepancy - between the artist and the people she speaks of and with.

This distinction between seeing the artist in the context of a group and as decisively separated from the group became critical in the construction of the cold war dichotomy between collective and individualistic values. What sort of person, what forms of behavior embodied these contradictory systems of merit? What kind of artist, what kind of art work models the different ideals at contest in the post-war period? Is it Ma Rainey, leaving the stage to step out of the isolating limelight into the common course of life? Or is it the "man of letters" as Allen Tate fashions him, supervising from a position of elevated splendor "the culture of language, to which the rest of culture is subordinate"?²⁰ In the post-World War Two period, the idealized visual artist - to shift venues for a moment - came to be not the social realist, who drew upon historical themes and the shared experiences of everyday life to create canvasses engaged in the social and political world, especially that defined by the Left.²¹ Rather it was the abstract expressionist, who projected onto canvas - if anything at all - his or her unique inner life. Robert Motherwell and Harold Rosenberg drew the lines sharply in their 1947 opening statement for the magazine *Possibilities*:

The temptation is to conclude that organized social thinking is "more serious" than the act that sets free in contemporary experience forms which that experience has made possible.

One who yields to this temptation makes a choice among various theories of manipulating the known elements of the so-called objective state of affairs. Once the political choice has been made, art and literature ought of course be given up. . . . Political commitment in our times means logically - no art, no literature.²²

On the one side are freedom, forms, art and literature, the transcendent act of creation; on the other, politics, manipulation, temptation, "organized social thinking." The distinction echoes to this day in the widespread hostility to "group" thinking and the constraints of history, and the erection of individual experience and private appropriation as the triumphant criteria of value. What such critics of the visual arts were attempting, like their New Critical peers, was to reinvest the artist as creator of abstract forms with the prestige of leadership in an intellectual world seemingly detached from the dynamics of social life. Such a figure was extraordinarily seductive, especially to aspiring intellectuals like me, who saw our investment in the life of the mind forever discounted in the real America of supermarkets and Chevies.

What one finds in "Ma Rainey," on the other hand, is an idea of the artist as deeply enmeshed in her historical moment and in her community. In her set, Ma sings a historically-rooted song, "Backwater Blues," based on a particularly devastating Mississippi River flood. The poem literally embodies verses from this song: it thus demonstrates, as do a number of other Brown poems, one of the ways in which he sees peoples' art and written verse to be related. Unlike the high modernists, for whom popular culture and *ars poetica* constituted opposing poles in value as well as in form, Brown in practice as well as theory roots poetry in the rich soil of the blues and other expressive forms of African-American folk culture.²³ Later, Brown will connect more formal verse to the song styles of increasingly urbanized black people in the North. The primary connections, however, run to the daily experiences of African-Americans rather than to the tradition, either of culture or of religion, that informs Eliot's verse and theory.

The relationships between popular expression and more formal poetry in Brown are not at all simple, however, as the variety of voices *within* "Ma Rainey" indicate: we hear a narrator, a fellow from Ma's audience to whom the narrator talks, and Ma Rainey herself, singing. The common coin among them is, first of all, a way of speaking: dialect - black, Southern, mainly rural. And second, a set of experiences embodied not only in "Backwater Blues," but also by "de hard luck/ Roun' our do'" and "de lonesome road." Paradoxically, and in accord with how Brown understands not only the blues but his own

art, while the subject matter may be devastation and displacement, the *function* has to do with gittin "way inside us, [to] Keep us strong."²⁴ That is, against the terrors thematized by flood and famine and the road, the artist deploys a shared music as an instrument of struggle and an earnest of survival. The poem establishes a critical connection between the cultural work of poetry and peoples' daily needs rather than imposing a fundamental division between them. The poem thus forces us to that crossroads, designated by Irving Howe as "bloody," where art and politics meet. For it asks not only what is the social function of art, but what is the social function of the pleasures we experience in consuming it.²⁵

Brown's poem "Strong Men" helps illuminate the connections among audience, poetry, and social change. The first two-thirds of the poem alternates between descriptions of the oppression visited upon "you" by "they" and the responses of "you" in song:

They broke you in like oxen,
 They scourged you,
 They branded you,
 They made your women breeders,
 They swelled your numbers with bastards. . . .
 They taught you the religion they disgraced.

You sang:
 Keep a-inchin' along
 Lak a po' inch worm. . . .

You sang:
 Bye and bye
 I'm gonna lay down dis heaby load. . . .

Song here comes to represent resistance and survival; out of it emerges the poem's refrain, "The strong men keep a-comin' on," represented literally in the text by physically incorporating the refrain into stanzas of song. The poem thus embodies the process by which art (song, poetry itself) plays a central mediating role in transforming oppression into oppositional movement.

Such poems, then, embody not only a theory about the origins and functions in a specific historical moment of African-American

expressive art, and about the audience central to the effectiveness of that art, but also about the material conditions of cultural production. These are, of course, theoretical categories distant from those of "The Metaphysical Poets" or of fifties ideas of poetry more generally. They raise for me the question of why Brown decided to embody such theoretical concerns in a poem dedicated to a *female* performer, Ma Rainey. Part of the answer to this question may have to do with what Sterling Stuckey describes as "an unusual affinity between author and poem, between voice and word."²⁶ But I think there are particular historical reasons as well. One of Brown's major critical concerns had to do with the impact the urbanization of African Americans had on folk and formal art. As Amiri Baraka points out, Ma Rainey was herself a transitional figure, "perhaps the one who can be called the *link* between the earlier, less polished blues styles and the smoother theatrical style of most of the later urban blues singers."²⁷ That is, she unites critical elements of rural Southern and mainly northern urban black life, bringing certain cultural continuities into a new and dangerous world.

More speculatively, I am struck with the fact that the venue for so many of Brown's male heroes is the road. Is he suggesting, both in the verses he uses from "Backwater Blues" and in Ma's act of solidarity with the folks, differences between male and female social roles in the African American community? With which, then, is the poet to be identified - the men of the lonesome road and the Midnight Special or the women looking "down on the place where I used to live"? Is the poet inevitably ambiguous, sexually indeterminate in that - or any - community? And is sexual indeterminacy, rightly understood, a source and symbol of the power needed to break down the constraining barrier between "high" and "popular" culture, between Beethoven and bop?

By taking poetry from the silent study to the platform, from the discipline of the footnote to that of performance, of the "Method," the theory exemplified in "Ma Rainey" works to open questions about the relationships of enactment and script, blues and written poetry, "popular" and "high" cultures - not incidentally, issues of more than abstract concern to students. But issues, too, deeply buried in my own educa-

tion, in which constructing distinctions, especially in such domains, and clothing them in the grammar of competence, signaled one's cultivation, one's aptitude to cross the threshold between Bop City and Sanborn House.

Let me now pick up a few of the many threads which have been trailing through this discussion - more particularly, my Yale education, cold-war culture, maturity, theory, sexuality, division, and most of all, perhaps, repression. I would begin with the venue for the talk that has become this paper, the Yale Women's Center. When I was at Yale, there was, of course, no Women's Center, indeed no women or, so far as I know, black faculty members, no female undergraduates - nor open discussions of why or, indeed, of gender or race at all. Nor was there Amy Lowell or Sterling Brown - or those for whom they stand as a kind of synecdoche. It was not so much that homogeneity was fetishized, as some of the better-known tracts of that time, like *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*, do indicate. Rather, the discourse was structured, as Epstein suggests, to pose the mature sensibility, "engaged neutrality," against the "riotously passionate," the "threat of alien subversion"; or, to reframe Eliot, the "chaotic, irregular, fragmentary" against those with the capacity constantly to amalgamate "disparate experience." "Maturity" achieved on such terms was costly, as, indeed, has been the American victory in the Cold War. To be sure, the successes wrought by those who had mastered this equilibrated sensibility, like those of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during the Second World War, were spectacular; indeed, we - and they - did wonderful things in unpacking the codes within the texts we had come to learn and needed to respect. The cost was exclusion, narrowness, ignorance, and, most ironically of all, acceptability - what I would in a word call repression.

There is nothing very new, of course, in understanding the cultural order of Yale in the 1950s as an exercise *not* in amalgamating and balancing contradictions, but in excluding, repressing, what might truly have threatened consensus. Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Arac, and Michael Rogin, among others, have made that argument familiar, though more in relation to New York than to New Haven. But repres-

sion has both public and private faces. What this discussion has been trying to evoke are the processes by which I have come to perceive how the public face, what I have been calling cold war culture, was inscribed, the more powerful by its invisibility, on my psyche. The repression I learned cut me off not so much from forms of sexuality or from activity for racial justice. Rather, repression at that personal level separated me from noticing, much less prizing and embracing, what I have here metaphorically embodied in Lowell and Brown.

However one feels about them as poets and critics, they raise certain unruly questions: for example, what is it - particularly when physical "identity" is not perforce the defining lens - to read as homosexual or as black? Does difference make a difference? What sources of creative energy are rooted not in Oedipal dread but in engendering, flaunting, and relishing difference? These are, I believe, powerful questions at any time, the more so when thinking one's way back into the world antecedent to *Understanding Poetry*. My students tend to take such questions, or at least my tension over them, as anachronistic: "back then" nobody was asking them, they argue, so why the personal fuss? But that is untrue - indeed, some writers and critics were even offering answers. What *is* true is that such questions - not to speak of such writers - fell altogether outside what was conceivable for me to ask - that is, to read, as I was taught, seriously. I want to state this with care: I learned an enormous amount about editing and connecting texts, about the sound and pace of English, about types of ambiguity, about the centrality of irony to literary value. Indeed, coming recently upon the papers I had written for Frederick Pottle's three-person seminar on the eighteenth century reminded me of just how much of what I do well I had been taught there. But even to have thought about race, gender, or sexuality as analytic categories, as the substance of theory, much less as scripts consequential to me as an intellectual, would have required me to shed the coat of tweed I had learned to wear - and virtually everything under it as well, a gesture of rebellion quite beyond my comprehension, and probably my courage then as well.²⁸

Notes

¹ For those unfamiliar with *The Heath Anthology*, it is the most revisionist collection of American literature available, containing what is by far the largest selection of female and minority writers as well as substantial selections by canonical figures. It may at this writing also be the widest- or second-widest selling text in the field.

² William H. Epstein, "Counter-Intelligence: Cold-War Criticism and Eighteenth-Century Studies," *ELH* 57 (1990): 79-80. Why, a reader might ask, the eighteenth century? That is a matter of more consequence to Epstein's essay than to mine, though it is true, as I will mention, that like almost every English graduate student at the time I took an eighteenth-century course. Undoubtedly, too, the very subject-matter of eighteenth-century studies lent itself to the processes of constructing cold war culture along the lines Epstein charts. But the fundamental fact was simply, I think, that Yale was distinctively strong in this area and had recruited distinguished faculty with major interests in it.

³ Among the most useful recent studies of the construction of cold-war culture are Robert J. Corber. *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993; and Alan M. Wald. *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987.

⁴ "Walt Whitman: Lover and Comrade," *The American Imago* 16 (Winter, 1959): 422; a slightly revised version of part of the now-vanished thesis.

⁵ The most useful brief account from the perspective of the 1990s of the social, economic, and political processes involved in that post-war transformation is Michaela DiLeonardo, "Black Myths, White Lies," *The Village Voice* 37 (Sept. 22, 1992): 30ff.

⁶ For a particularly cogent analysis of this phenomenon, see David Suchoff, "The Rosenberg Case and the New York Intellectuals," *Secret Agents: the Rosenberg Case, McCarthyism and Fifties America*. Eds. Marjorie Garber and Rebecca Walkowitz. New York: Routledge, 1995.

⁷ *The Heath* is above all a revisionist text, designed to refashion the canon of American literature so that writers of color and white women authors play in our classrooms the extensive roles they have, in fact, played in our culture.

⁸ See, for example, George Core, "Agrarianism, Criticism, and the Academy." *A Band of Prophets: The Vanderbilt Agrarians After Fifty Years*. Eds. William C. Havard and Walter Sullivan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982, 129: "The leading Agrarians [like John Crowe Ransom,

Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren] wrote criticism not only in a positive response to Eliot and the others [like I.A. Richards, William Empson, and F.R. Leavis] but in a negative reaction against Marxism and Marxist criticism (one remembers the alternative title that was proposed for *I'll Take My Stand--Tracts Against Communism*). . . ."

⁹ T.S. Eliot. "The Metaphysical Poets." *Selected Essays*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950, 247.

¹⁰ This view was held, I should add, by critics as different - or so they seemed to us - as Cleanth Brooks and Lionel Trilling. The paradigmatic Trilling essay, as Bruce Spear once pointed out in an American Studies Association paper, is "Reality in America," the opening essay of *The Liberal Imagination*. New York, 1950.

¹¹ Shari Benstock raises a similar question in "Expatriate Sapphic Modernism: Entering Literary History." *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions*. Eds. Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow. New York: New York University Press, 1990, 198: "It has been difficult to theorize female modernism because we do not yet have available - edited and in print - all the literary works and supporting materials that allow us to pose such metatextual questions."

Oddly, Lowell never enters her quite valuable discussion, one which I otherwise found very helpful in formulating some of my own ideas.

¹² "Amy Lowell and Cultural Borders." *Speaking the Other Self: New Essays on American Literature*. Ed. Jeanne Campbell Reesman. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997, 288-296.

¹³ Cf. Cassandra Laity, "H.D. and A.C. Swinburne: Decadence and Sapphic Modernism." *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions*. Eds. Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow. New York: New York University Press, 1990, 219: "In Eliot's and Yeats's personal 'scripts' of their poetic development, the achievement of a 'virile' modernism depends on separation rather than connection with the 'effeminate' influence of Romanticism. Contrary to Harold Bloom's Oedipal model of father-son combat, male modernists appear to have perceived their Romantic precursors as insidiously possessive 'foremothers' whose influence threatened to feminize both their psyches and their art, stripping them of masculine autonomy and creative power." Later (221) Laity comments: "Explicit or implicit rejections of 'women's writing' for the 'masculine' virtues of intellect, 'unity,' objectivity, and concreteness lay behind Pound's professed 'contempt' for the 'softness of the 'nineties.'""

It is interesting to note, in view of recent explorations of Eliot's homosexual inclinations, how closeted he remained, in theoretical, perhaps, even more than in poetic practice.

¹⁴ *Negro Poetry and Drama*. Washington: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1938, 80; "Introduction" with Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee to *The Negro Caravan*. New York: The Dryden Press, 1941, 10-11.

¹⁵ *Negro Poetry and Drama*, 43.

¹⁶ "Unhistoric History." *Journal of Negro History* 31 (1929): 134-161.

¹⁷ "Negro Folk Expression: Spirituals, Seculars, Ballads and Work Songs." *Phylon* 14 (1953): 60-61.

¹⁸ "Introduction." *The Negro Caravan*, 3.

¹⁹ *The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown*. Chicago: TriQuarterly Books, 1980, 62-63; used by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers.

²⁰ "The Man of Letters in the Modern World." *The Man of Letters in the Modern World*. New York: Meridian Books, 1955, 22.

²¹ See Bram Dijkstra. *American Expressionism: Art and Social Change, 1920-1950*. New York: Abrams, 2003; and *Social Realism: Art as a Weapon*. Edited and introduced by David Shapiro. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973.

²² Robert Motherwell and Harold Rosenberg, "An Occasional Review." *Possibilities* #1 (Winter 1947): 1.

²³ See, for example, "The Blues as Folk Poetry." *Folk-Say, A Regional Miscellany*. Ed. B.A. Botkin. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930, 324-339.

²⁴ Cf. Ralph Ellison. "Richard Wright's Blues." *Shadow and Act*. New York: Random House, 1953, 78: "The blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged edge and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism."

²⁵ Cf. "Introduction" to *The Negro Caravan*, 7: "Literature by Negro authors about Negro experience is a literature in process and like all such literature (including American literature) must be considered as significant, not only because of a body of established masterpieces, but also because of the illumination it sheds upon a social reality."

²⁶ "Introduction." *The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown*. Chicago: TriQuarterly Books, 1980, 3.

²⁷ LeRoi Jones. *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. New York: William Morrow, 1963, 89.

²⁸ I wish to express my appreciation to the editorial board of the *Yale Journal of Criticism*, and especially to Laura Wexler, for their very helpful criticisms. I also want to acknowledge the help of Ann Fitzgerald, Louis Kampf, and Marcy Knopf; their comments immeasurably improved this paper.

"The Great Fitzgerald: *Gatsby* Revisited"

Carl D. Malmgren

The Great Gatsby was published in April 1925. As late as March of that year Fitzgerald was undecided about the title for the work he hoped would make a claim for him as a great American novelist. He was waffling among a number of possibilities, including *Gold-Hatted Gatsby*, *Among Ash Heaps and Millionaires*, *Trimalchio*, *The High-Bouncing Lover*, and *Under the Red, White, and Blue* (in March of '25 he cabled Maxwell Perkins that he was "crazy" about the tri-color patriotic title). In the end, acting reportedly on Zelda's advice, he settled on *The Great Gatsby*. This essay argues that this title is perfect, just because it is so useful. By tracking the migration of the titular epithet "great" from the protagonist Gatsby to the narrator Carraway to the author Fitzgerald, we hope to accomplish the following: to review some of the highlights of the critical reception of the novel¹; to identify and explore a kind of oxymoron informing American studies; to rehearse several different ideas about the distinctive nature of the American character or selfhood; and perhaps to make our own small contribution to the annals of *Gatsby* scholarship by identifying one aspect of the novel's greatness.

1. The "Great" Gatsby

The epithet "great" is, of course, first attached to Gatsby - Nick takes care to remind us very early on that he has earned his way on to the title page: "Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction" (6). Gatsby may supply the name, but Carraway presumably adds the adjective. In that same introduction Nick stipulates the basis of that greatness in a much-quoted passage: "[T]here was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. [...] It was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again" (6). Gatsby believes in the "green light," in the spectrum of romantic possibilities available

to him in twentieth-century America. In short, Gatsby is exceptional, indeed great, because he is a Dreamer. "The power of Gatsby's imagination make[s] him great" (Donaldson, *Fool for Love* 109).

In the course of the novel the figure of Gatsby recalls a number of romantic icons - ambitious young redneck, idealistic dreamer, brave soldier, devoted lover - and Romance, as Northrop Frye reminds us, features heroic protagonists. Clearly there is something grand or larger-than-life about Gatsby's boundless capacity to dream and his unswerving devotion to the object of that dream. This capacity is always referred to in positive terms: Nick remarks the "colossal vitality of [Gatsby's] illusion" (101); he speaks of Jay's "incorruptible dream" (162). As one critic notes, for Fitzgerald, "Ideality, the longing for transcendence, these are good in themselves" (Chase 165), and Jay is the epitome of that longing. Gatsby's "incorruptible dream" invests him with a single-mindedness; it gives him a vitality or presence that others take notice of, remark, and whisper about; it places him outside of history and time: "'Can't repeat the past? 'he crie[s] incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'" (116). In short, it invests him with a kind of mythic status: "Gatsby is a 'mythic' character, and no other word will define him" (Bewley 40).

Lionel Trilling remarks Gatsby's status as an *American* archetype: "For Gatsby, divided between power and dream, comes inevitably to stand for America itself. Ours is the only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one, 'the American dream'" (244). The elegiac coda to the novel reinforces this identification between dreamer and dreamland: "[F]or a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder" (189). Empowered by his own capacity for wonder, believing in his ability to *real-ize* his dream, soldiering on for his (betrayed) ideals, Gatsby thus becomes a great American type: "[H]e is an heroic personification of the American romantic hero, the true heir of the American dream" (Bewley 40). Trilling's and Bewley's assessments of *Gatsby* appeared in the postwar early fifties and serve in part as a way of proving that American literature had come of age

and that it, like the country itself, deserves the epithet "great." These critics argue in effect that *Gatsby* is *great American* literature.²

In terms of the question of American identity, *Gatsby* can be seen as heir to Thoreau and Whitman, an avatar in the great American tradition of self-invention. What is great is not the self that he creates, "the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old would be likely to invent" (104). *Gatsby* affirms the life-changing possibilities of self-creation itself, even if it is founded on illusion and naïveté. As Fitzgerald remarks in a letter written during his revision of the novel, one who enjoys this kind of power is in fact a magician: "That's the whole burden of this novel - the loss of those illusions that give such color to the world so that you don't care whether things are true or false as long as they partake of the magical glory" (qtd. in Mellow 216-7). This kind of magic goes beyond true and false, perhaps even beyond good and evil. To this idea of magic, and to the possibility of self-creation *ex nihilo*, *Gatsby* remains "faithful to the end" (104).

And yet. In so many ways it is clear that *Gatsby* is not great. Perhaps the first best indication of this comes during Nick and Jay's first outing together - to the city for lunch. *Gatsby*, who is going to ask a favor of Nick, initiates the conversation by vowing to dispel the rumors and reveal "God's truth" about himself. He proceeds to tell a totally outlandish story - a complete fabrication - about being a fabulously wealthy Oxford-educated orphan from the Midwest. When Nick, himself a Midwesterner, asks what part, *Gatsby* says "San Francisco," to which geographical whopper Nick understatedly responds "I see." *Gatsby* then, according to his narrative, tried to escape something very sad by living "like a young rajah" in Europe - collecting jewels, hunting big game, painting a little. When the war came he enlisted and "tried very hard to die," but he "led an enchanted life" and ended up a war hero with medals from all the Allies, including "little Montenegro." Throughout this clichéd recitation Nick can barely suppress his incredulity or stifle his laughter. "It was," he tells us, "like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines" (71). Nick is sure that *Gatsby* must be "pulling his leg" right up till the moment that *Gatsby* extracts from his pockets the medal from Montenegro and a picture of himself carrying a cricket bat at Oxford. Nick is utterly confounded.

"Then it was all true," he almost gasps. Despite Nick's credulity, it is clear to the reader that Gatsby is a compulsive liar - when caught in a lie about his supposedly inherited wealth, he panics and hastily contrives a story of having lost it all in the "big panic - the panic of the war" (95). In this context the epithet "great" takes on a shady coloration, closer to its use in 1920s spectacles - the great Ringling brothers, the great conjurer, the great and powerful Wizard of Oz. Gatsby is indeed great, as a cheap magician is "great"; he is a charlatan, a mountebank, a prestidigitator who uses elaborate sets and gaudy set pieces in order to divert his audience's attention while he is pulling trinkets and artifacts out of his pocket to prove his "greatness." Only, as happens to the Wizard of Oz, the curtain sometimes parts to let us see the man at the "controls."

Nick warns us at the very beginning that Gatsby "represent[s] everything for which I have an unaffected scorn" (6). That "everything" certainly includes: Gatsby's phoniness and affections, including his formal speech patterns and his adoption of Britishisms such as "old sport"; his naïveté (as figured in his youthful "schedule of improvement" found in a ragged copy of *Hopalong Cassidy*, a schedule which allots two hours per day to "study needed inventions" à la Tom Swift); and his concern with appearances and his questionable taste - at different places he draws attention to his imitation Hotel de Ville, his ineffably gaudy yellow car, and of course to his beautiful hand-made shirts, the last episode eliciting Daisy's tearful, bathetic, and moronic response: "They're such beautiful shirts. It makes me sad because I've never seen such - such beautiful shirts before" (98). Gatsby in fact wears a pink suit on the hottest day of the year, the day on which he is going to challenge Tom for the possession of Daisy.

Nick says that he "disapproved of [Gatsby] from beginning to end" (162). Surely the brunt of his disapproval comes from the latter's questionable business practices, clumsy social skills, and the thoroughly corrupt object on which he has settled his dreams. Gatsby is, after all, a crook - charming, handsome, presentable, with a killer smile - but a hoodlum nonetheless, who has acquired his wealth through criminal activities, including bootlegging, peddling phony securities, perhaps even fixing sporting events. And he acts suspi-

ciously, covering up incidents at his parties because he "doesn't want trouble with *anybody*" (48). In addition, he is not shy about using people to achieve his ends. He, in effect, asks Nick to "pimp" for him by inviting Daisy to tea and then baldly offers to pay him for services rendered by committing securities fraud (insider trading). Most questionable, perhaps, is what Gatsby's dream fixes itself upon, the "foul dust [that] floated in the wake of his dreams" (6), Daisy Buchanan and all that she and her circle represent - namely money, power, corruption, carelessness - in short, America in the 1920s. As numerous commentators have noted, Gatsby is thus a critique of the way in which the American dream has been perverted in the 20th century, attaching itself to all that is crass, commercial, "material without being real" (169).³ Gatsby may indeed be a "son of God," but as such he "must be about His Father's Business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty" (104). The phrase "the great Gatsby" thus refers to a somewhat sinister would-be conjuror, a "cheap sharper" in Gatsby's own words, someone who pulls medals out of pockets, makes policeman disappear with a wave of his hand, but who cannot erase five years and pull a common Daisy out of his hat. By way of summary, then, focusing on Gatsby as "great" is a way of measuring America's aspirations to greatness, especially in terms of the distance between the promise and the payoff, the dream and the reality. As Mizener concludes: "In so far as Gatsby represents the simple virtue which Fitzgerald associates with the West, he is a really great man; in so far as he achieves the kind of notoriety which the East accords success of his kind, he is great about as Barnum was" (qtd. in Tredell 48).

2. *The "Great" Carraway*

Once Jay Gatsby's greatness has been undermined, critics tend to displace the adjective from him to the other main protagonist of the novel, Nick Carraway. Here the adjective is inflected from "great" to "good" as we move from the realm of myth and spectacle and magnitude to the axis of morality (not a surprising move given the strong Puritan traditions in America; the country was seen as either the City of Gold or the City of God, depending on the reason why the settlers

came here). Nick is everything Jay is not - decent, honest, down-to-earth. Jay is stuck in a moment five years past, whereas Nick grows up during the summer of '22 and makes a drastic change in career plans⁴ and place of habitation. In the course of that summer he turns thirty, the age, according to Fitzgerald, when one gives up youthful pleasures and dissipations and takes one's rightful place in the world.

The Nick is great/good position holds that he serves as the moral center for the novel. Nick emerges from his experience "in possession of a new and wholly revitalized moral knowledge" (Hoffman 13). The novel in fact charts his coming of age; as one critic puts it: "Fitzgerald places character against character, setting against setting, and one plot against the other to demonstrate for the reader the moral change and ethical growth of his narrator. . . . [T]he novel's meaning is finally indistinguishable from Nick's change in awareness" (Mellard 853).⁵ Nick begins his narration remarking his propensity to reserve judgment. The events of the summer of '22 make him realize that tolerance might be OK; moral wishy-washiness is not. This reading usually highlights three key points in the novel where Nick passes clear-cut judgment on all the major principals - Jay Gatsby, Jordan Baker, and the Buchanans. He not only breaks it off with Jordan ("I'd had enough of all of them for one day and suddenly that included Jordan too" [150]), but does so in a way that challenges her callousness. The day after the "holocaust", when she calls Nick and complains that he had been short with her the previous day, he brusquely responds: "How could it have mattered then?" (163). That slap in the face effectively terminates their relationship. Nick's indictment of the Buchanans is sweeping: "[T]hey were careless people, Tom and Daisy - they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made" (187-8). As for Gatsby, Nick's penultimate remarks to him are "They're a rotten crowd. You're better than the whole damn bunch put together." Nick adds that he has always been glad that he said that: "It was the only compliment I ever gave him, because I disapproved of him from beginning to end" (162). It might be argued that Nick achieves a kind

of greatness by rising above his disapproval to discover what Gatsby's true worth is.

At one point Daisy insists that Nick reminds her of a "rose, an absolute rose." Nick rejoins (to the reader) that he is "not even faintly like a rose" (19). Perhaps Nick is warning us not to believe everything people say about us or about him. This certainly applies to the use of the word "great" (whatever its meaning) for Nick. Nick may be likeable, discerning, even wittily ironic, but he is not "great." In critiquing him, critics have remarked his pettiness, his meanness, his snobbishness, his racism and colonialism, his obvious fascination for the world of old wealth which he indicts and condemns, his avoidance of emotional entanglements or commitments, his retreat from the real world at the end of the novel,⁶ but we would like to focus on two specific, specious claims he makes about his own character. In the third paragraph of his enunciation Nick says that by way of following his father's advice about criticizing others, he is "inclined to reserve all judgments"; he adds that "reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope" (5, 6). He is apparently applauding himself for his tolerance, a trait that he admits has made him the "victim of not a few veteran bores," and privy to the "secret griefs of wild unknown men" (5). Complaining about "veteran bores" and "wild men" is hardly reserving judgment or practicing tolerance. Nick is quick to judge nearly everyone he meets, usually in a petty, mean, or disparaging way. Tom Buchanan has a "cruel body"; Daisy is insincere and manipulative; Jordan Baker is snobbish and dishonest (she listens at doors); his first afternoon at the Buchanans leaves him "confused and a little disgusted" (24-5). Those he likes are not spared his disapprobation; Nick makes fun of Gatsby's attire, his gaudy automobile, his social ineptitude (he disappears just when Nick is about to introduce him to Tom Buchanan), his lack of social insight (he thinks that those who dropped in on him, Tom Buchanan and the Sloanes, are really inviting him to lunch), and his tacky parties. Returning to Nick and his relationship to others, it is not really an exaggeration to say, as critics have, that Nick has a "basic contempt for mankind" (Donaldson, "The Trouble with Nick" 132) or a "distaste for the human and for himself" (Godden 96).

Nick's other misleading claim about himself is that he is "one of the few honest people that I have ever known" (64). He may not tell any bald-faced lies, but he is guilty of lies of omission - failing to tell the whole truth. He fails to tell Daisy the truth about Tom's affair, Tom the truth about Daisy's affair. He fails to tell anyone the truth about Myrtle Wilson's death, although he apparently is the only one who knows the whole story. As Scrimgeour notes: "The truth about Mrs. Wilson's death could be damaging, but it is more likely to be simply incommoding. We have, in any case, no sign from Carraway that he even considered the problem" (77). He fails to tell anyone - even the police - the real story behind Gatsby's death and Wilson's suicide. When he runs into Tom one last time in New York, he fails to tell him exactly what he thinks of the role the latter played in the whole debacle, insisting "You [Tom] know what I think of you," a remark to which Tom responds "You're crazy, Nick," suggesting that he knows no such thing (187). Although Nick freely passes judgment in private, in the public arena he holds his tongue. Most important, he fails to tell the truth to himself or to the reader about the role he plays in the adulterous liaison between Gatsby and Daisy. It is no accident that in his famous coda to his narration he uses the word "pander" (in reference to the American continent which "had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams" [189]). Pandering is a practice that is perhaps on his mind, and his performance of this service for Gatsby leads inevitably to the "holocaust."

In short, Nick is neither great nor good. Richard Stallman goes so far as to argue that the "moral rectitude of Nick is but the mask of hypocrisy" (5); Nick is "a defunct priest in the confessional box, a prig with holier-than-thou airs" (8). Another critic, Peter Lisca, also rejects Nick as moral center for the novel, but insists that he serves another function as narrator: "Nick embodies in extreme the principles of order and decorum," acting against "the messiness of other people's lives" (21, 22). Lisca's alternate reading of the narrator reinforces the idea that focusing on Nick does bring out another dimension of the novel. Focusing on Nick reminds us that, like other modernist tales, this story is as concerned with the observer as with the observed. *Gatsby* is as much about its narrator as it is about its titular protago-

nist. And Nick represents a different form of American selfhood from Gatsby, the kind of self that ventures out into an ambiguous and disquieting world and discovers in itself a discriminating - sometimes cynical, sometimes ironic, sometimes resigned - intelligence. The narrator of *Gatsby* is the ironic modern counterpart of Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown; Nick spends a night in the (Eastern) forest and finds that he wants "no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart" (6). And while Nick does retreat from the world at the end of the summer, his move is not a complete withdrawal from or rejection of that world. He is not, like Goodman Brown, consumed by disgust, for he spends the next two years inscribing a record of his experiences, the document he titles "The Great Gatsby." The discriminating intelligence finds its selfhood in articulation; it expresses its Self. And the document that Nick indites, like other "great" modern novels, records the problematics and ambiguity of moralistic and moral determinations. We might say that the narrational set-up of *Gatsby*, Nick's production of Jay, qualifies the novel as an example of *great American literature*.

3. *The Great Fitzgerald*

Critics have often made note of the technique of "counterpoint" (Mellard) or "dissociation" (Troy) or "division" (Stallman) in the novel, usually focusing on the juxtaposition of Nick the observer and Gatsby the dreamer. Clearly the novel is structured around paired and contrasted characters (e.g., Tom and Jay or Daisy and Myrtle), physical settings (e.g., East Egg and West Egg), romantic triangles, and plot events (e.g., parties at Gatsby's). But division and contrast occur within characters as well. Nick notes that he himself is a conflicted participant/observer: "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life" (40). And the main protagonist, Gatsby, occupies a similar position, orchestrating and conducting these spectacular parties but always seen on the margin, on the edge, outside looking in. A similar case could be made for other "players" in the narrative. *Gatsby* is populated by incipient schizophrenics.

Stallman's critique of the novel claims that the pairings and divisions in the novel act to cancel each other out: "East is West, night is day, reality is unreality. Reality, substance without substance, is overwhelmed by dream and confounded by illusion. Nothing in this novel is not confused" (9). As a result, according to Stallman: "At the center of this book what is there but a moral and a temporal hole" (7). Another critic, Michael Holquist, speaks of the characters of *Gatsby* in terms of oxymoron, calling them stereotypic characters that attempt to fix their meaning or sense even as they undermine that possibility: "The ambivalence and lack that characterize the stereotype are manifest in the novel as a complex series of contradictions and incommensurabilities. There are so many of these and they are of such variety, it may be said that the text is governed by the trope of oxymoron" (464). The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines oxymoron as a "figure of speech which combines two seemingly contradictory elements." Holquist's analysis of oxymoron, like Stallman's treatment of division, tends to emphasize contradiction; the stereotypes serve to cancel or undermine each other. The oxymorons of *Gatsby* convert *either/or* into *neither/nor*.

But an oxymoron *combines* as well as contradicts, and we would argue rather that Fitzgerald insists that his characters are *both/and*. In another context, Fitzgerald applauds the ability "to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function" (qtd. in Tredell 128). He thus claims exemption from incapacitating or deconstructive aporias. A. B. Paulson sees in the novel "a predominate pattern of chopping, breaking, smashing, and falling to pieces" (315). By way of contrast to the ideas of splits and divisions and contradictions, we would remark the motif of the egg. There are a lot of eggs in the novel. Gatsby stands on the steps of his mansion on West Egg and looks longingly at the green light on Daisy's dock in East Egg. Nick makes passing reference to egg crushed flat at the contact point in the Columbus story (9). An egg is a good example of an *either/or* which is a *both/and*. And so when Wolfsheim speaks of making a business "gonn-egg-tion" for Nick, perhaps Fitzgerald is punning on his basic strategy of composition, yoking together *either/ors* until they become *both/ands*.

The dominant trope for *Gatsby*, then, might not be oxymoron but rather catachresis, the forcible joining together of two terms from different registers or lexicons. *Gatsby* earns both senses of the word "great"; Nick is both moral anchor and petty prig.⁷ Not surprisingly, it is this trope of catachresis which informs much of Fitzgerald's discourse. To cite a few examples: Daisy's voice exercises a "singing compulsion"; Tom possesses a "peremptory heart" whereas Jay's is "ghostly"; Jordan looks out at the "spectroscopic gayety" of one of Jay's parties with "contemptuous interest"; Wolfsheim eats with "ferocious delicacy,"; *Gatsby* contemplates a universe of "ineffable gaudiness"; Myrtle's accident constitutes a "tragic achievement." The overriding example is, of course, the title itself, "the great *Gatsby*." One other catachresis we might mention is the phrase "American literature," disparaged by some as an oxymoron. This catachresis describes a body of work willing itself into being (American Literature) even as it calls into question its constituent terms and measures the distance between the country's dreams and its realities. Someone who composes such literature aspires to a Selfhood that dares to dream even as it knows the dream lost and must weigh the dream's cost.

The Great Gatsby thus incorporates a number of aspects of American "greatness." It gives us the Great *Gatsby*, product of the nineteenth century, at once the self-creating American Adam and the self-deluding, snake-oil-selling confidence man. His history is narrated by the Great Carraway, who is at once disapproving and reproofing Puritan and the discriminating modern caught up in the either/or dilemma. The Great Fitzgerald, anticipating the attraction of the post-modern both/and, conflates these two stories into a seamless narrative web/text.

When the novel failed to sell as expected, Fitzgerald was inclined to blame the title, which he was never really satisfied with. Hitchins can imagine no other title: "It was nearly titled just plain *Gatsby*. It remains 'the great' because it confronts the defeat of youth and beauty and idealism, and finds the defeat unbearable, then turns to face the defeat unflinchingly" (86). And there is a greatness to *Gatsby*; it lays claim to being a *great American novel* (equal emphasis on each term). What is great about the novel is Fitzgerald's rendition of Car-

raway's production of Gatsby's reinvention of himself as great American. And a part of that rendition's greatness comes from the language used in that layered literary construction, language which spans fissures and rifts even as it acknowledges their existence. The novel is among other things a "word beast." The novel's pros (and its multiple cons) come in part from *Gatsby's* prose.

Notes

¹ For a very good overview and compendium of the seminal documents of *Gatsby* criticism, see Tredell.

² Trilling and Bewley's views have a kind of historical pertinence, which is not to say they are entirely outdated. Gatsby's greatness was maintained recently in a *Vanity Fair* article by Christopher Hitchens. Hitchens notes that two key words in the novel are "pointless" and "careless" (and their analogues). He goes on to suggest his own idea of Gatsby's greatness: "The ultimate and startling point about Gatsby is that he does care, deeply and secretly and inarticulately and naively and vulnerably, and he cares for someone who could hardly care less. And he *is* innocent, in spite of all his worldliness. This is the lineament of tragedy" (84).

³ For elaborations of this argument see Bruccoli and Dyson.

⁴ Given the fact that Nick spends two years after his retreat from the East Coast writing the manuscript we read, it might be argued that his new career is writer.

⁵ For a different take on the same theme, see Hanzo.

⁶ For elaboration of these aspects of Carraway, see Donaldson and Scrimgeour. For an interesting Brechtian analysis of Nick's "lexicon of evasion," see Godden, 92-103.

⁷ Cf. Lisca: "[I]n reference to the argument concerning Nick as the moral center of the novel, ... it emerges that although he is not a 'hypocrite' and spiritually bankrupt neither is he an acceptable moral norm. He acts as if he were, but the moral center remains, as always, with the reader, who must judge not only the story of Gatsby, but also the judgment of that story by the narrator himself" (27).

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Identities in Practice

Theodore R. Schatzki

Identity has been high on the theoretical agenda in the humanities and social sciences in recent decades.¹ Whether it has been taken, *inter alia*, as definitive of forms of politics, as a successor to the notion of roles, or as what composes the self once the self is no longer conceived of as a substantial entity, theorists have found the notion necessary - and irresistible. Much has been written about how identities crystallize from social matrices and form nodal points for the organization of social life, and also about how biological factors might underlie certain prominent, typically universal identities. Too often, however, the nature of the acquisition and possession of identities has been presumed and accorded insufficient attention.

Identity is an affair, at once, of life and of society. It is an affair of life in the sense that identity has to do with the constellation of mental conditions and actions that composes a person's moment-to-moment existence. Possessing an identity clearly involves mental facts about the person concerned. Someone's identity as, say, a firefighter embraces attitudes, desires, and beliefs - concerning fires, politicians, the firefighting profession, and the like. Moreover, because mental conditions are expressed in action, a person's identity also encompasses at least those activities in which the pertinent mental conditions are manifested. A firefighter's identity as firefighter is also bound up with his or her actions toward fires, politicians, citizens, colleagues, and the like. In addition to being an affair of life, identity is a social affair. A person's life comes to possess certain felt-understood centers of motivation and emotional as well as activity organization because of processes, phenomena, and events of social life - for instance, interactions among people, media bombardment, peer pressure, others' judgments, social opportunity, and the propagation of fictional archetypes. In short, identity is a socially-governed affectional, motivational, and actional center of individual life.

Not all the theorists who make up the legions that today invoke the notion of identity will accept this life-social rendering of it. Be-

cause many contemporary humanist theorists affirm the social constitution of identity, the claim that it is a social affair will be relatively uncontroversial. At the same time, various theorists are bound to be suspicious of the construal of identity as a life affair because this construal presupposes something toward which pervasive incredulity exists among humanist theorists today: mind. My present aim, however, is not to convince doubters of this account. Instead, I want to argue that identity, construed in the above general way, depends on a more basic phenomenon: human practices. Possessing an identity is, in the first place, a fact about participating in practices; both the life and social dimensions of identity derive from this practical state of affairs. Stated in other words, this socially-governed center of individual life exists because life is carried on within practices.²

1. What is Identity?

Identity, succinctly put, is who one is. Who someone is can be exceedingly varied. A person can be an African-American, a resident of 7th Street, a professor, a lover of vanilla ice cream, a bumbling Sunday tennis player, a graduate of Tennessee State, an American, a citizen of the world, a curmudgeon, varied combinations of these and of an indefinite array of further things, and so on. One can also be a six footer, a blue eyed strawberry blond, disabled, a sufferer from ulcers or from dysentery, and so on through an indefinitely long list of physical, physiological, biological, and medical facts about, or states of, one's body.

The notion of identity marks a deep divide that Western humanist thought has traditionally drawn between two categories of entity: persons and things. Whereas a person, for present purposes, can be defined as a who, no thing is a who. A thing is a what. Persons, of course, are whats too, but to treat them as such is, as it is said, to "objectify" or "dehumanize" them. This possibility notwithstanding, the distinction between person and thing is pegged to the difference between who someone is and what something is. This difference, as Heidegger above all made clear, is misleadingly construed simply as an opposition between sorts of essential feature that define two cate-

gories of entity. It is, in fact, such an opposition, but to say this is to occlude just how different are the different sorts of essential feature that characterize persons and things respectively. What constitutes who-ness, possessing an identity, is a relatedness to one's own being, to who one oneself is. Who one oneself is, moreover, is worked out by being it. No such self-relatedness or process characterizes things. Whereas the self-relatedness that constitutes who someone is is worked out through existing, things are somethings by virtue of specific features that make them, fully and ipso facto, the sorts of thing they are so long as they possess these features. The fact that identity lies in self-relatedness also explains why, as the lists of identities in the previous paragraph suggest, the range of identities open to people comprises attributes that people alone can possess as well as attributes (such as biological and physical facts) that things can have too. Someone, for example, can be both an African-American, which people alone can be, and a six footer, which a machine, bear, lion, or asteroid also can be. Attributes of both sorts are equally matters to which someone can be related in the specific way, to be discussed momentarily, that qualifies them as someone's identity. Consequently, the "metaphysical" divide between persons and things is not a divide between entities that do and do not possess certain properties. It is, instead, a divide between entities that can and cannot take up a certain relation to any dimension of their being. I hasten to add that nothing I have written entails that the person-thing distinction either lines up with the human-nonhuman one or is absolute in character. These are not, however, matters germane to the present discussion.

That self-relatedness that qualifies an entity as a someone, and which is worked out by being it, is self-understanding. An entity is someone, that is, has an identity, when it has an understanding of who it itself is. What, moreover, is involved in understanding itself as it does is worked out by way of being it. Another way of putting the first claim is that a person is an entity that has an understanding of its own meaning. This is an equivalent formulation because who someone is and what something is are two fundamental categories of meaning, where meaning is construed as intelligible being: as a who and as a what are two basic ways in which something can be intelligible as a

something. Although anthropological research has demonstrated that these two basic ways are not the only ones and also reiterated that who-what must not be assimilated to human-nonhuman, this schema dominates in the history of Western thought and forms the background against which talk of identity has become so insistent in recent humanistic theory.

Two prominent distinctions bear upon the notion of identity. The first is self-understanding versus others' understanding, the second identity versus uniqueness.

Identity is, on the one hand, who someone understands him- or herself to be and, on the other, who others understand that person to be. The latter understanding, or regulation, is often characterized as who someone is simpliciter, such that the distinction between these two types of understanding-identity is the distinction between a person's understanding of who she is and who she is. This way of characterizing the distinction makes some sense because who others understand or construe someone as being tends to be simpler and more stable than that person's understanding of the matter; it makes some sense also because the process of others construing someone as such and such is less under the control of specific individuals than is self-understanding (social regulations and norms, for example, might be at work). This characterization is misleading, however, because it needlessly grants greater essentiality, and the veneer of objective being, to others' understanding. In the following, consequently, I will contrast self- with others' understanding. One key feature of the existence of these two sorts of identity is the possibility of divergence and interaction between the two, this being the source, among other things, of tensions and transformations in people's existence.

The second distinction is that between identity and uniqueness. More than one person can in principle possess each possible identity mentioned thus far, for instance, African-American, curmudgeon, lover of vanilla ice cream, and blue eyed strawberry blonde. With regard, moreover, merely to the fact of being, say, African-American, one person who is an African-American is as much an African-American as anyone else who is an African-American; that is to say, anyone with this named identity is equally an African-American. The

same holds true if more fine-grained identities are in question, for instance, Northern, inner-city, single mother, Caribbean, African-American woman. *Vis-à-vis* designatable identities, consequently, uniqueness can consist solely in possessing a combination of identity components that no one else possesses. Of course, nothing in principle excludes the possibility of someone else possessing any particular combination. Construed thus, uniqueness is precarious.

Some people will find nothing disturbing or menacing about this situation. Not only are some people happy, and not only do some people even desire, to share identities with others, but those conversant with theory might opine that identity combinations can be, and often are, sufficiently complex as to guarantee uniqueness for practical purposes. Some thinkers, however, have feared that uniqueness of this sort deflates and threatens the human condition. They have claimed that who someone is is unique to each individual, not sharable with anyone else. A prominent contemporary representative of this thought is Hannah Arendt.³ Pitching the distinction between what and who at a higher level than was done above, she argues that who someone is, the unique person someone is, cannot be captured in any list of attributes, in any list of who that person or others understand that person to be: The particularity of a particular person cannot be captured in characteristics that are potentially or actually shared with other persons.⁴ Uniqueness is something else, something further, that cannot be expressed linguistically but only manifested in thought and action. It cannot be put into words; at best someone - including the person herself - can become familiar with it through experience.

The specifics of Arendt's account aside, a long tradition in Western thought and practice has equated who someone is with something unique about that person. The Augustinian notion of the soul is one, very influential version of this idea. It is a vexed philosophical question, however, whether the particularity of the particular can be captured in general terms, especially when space and time are taken into account. This question is a general one and not restricted to the issue of identity. Indeed, I suspect that the belief that person identity presents special problems in this context rests on unsubstantiable metaphysical beliefs about human existence. In any event, taking a

stand on this issue is beyond the scope of the current essay. Instead of addressing it, I will mostly set the issue of uniqueness aside. Who someone is is ambiguous. On the one hand, who someone is is that person's identity, where a person's identity is what the person is understood to be, by herself or by others. On the other hand, who someone is is the particularity of that individual as a unique creature; this uniqueness cannot be understood, but can only become familiar. My concern in the following is principally with the first sense of whoness, identity.

2. *Practices and Identity*

As noted, my principal thesis is that identity is an affair of human practices. This means that who people are, both their self-understandings and how others understand them, derives from their participation in practices. A person is no one apart from such participation.

By "practices" I mean organized nexuses of activity such as religious practices, football practices, banking practices, cooking practices, political practices, and educational practices. A practice is an open spatial-temporal manifold of actions that are linked through shared understandings, a set of rules, and a space of teleoaffectivities. The shared understandings involved pertain to action, rules are explicit formulations that are supposed to govern action, and teleoaffective spaces encompass normativized, hierarchically ordered ends, projects, and tasks, to varying degrees allied with normativized emotions. Contemporary American middle-class cooking practices, for instance, are a nexus of such actions as cleaning, mixing, cutting, stirring, setting ovens, and reading cookbooks that are linked by (1) understandings, among other things, of how to carry out and respond to these actions in particular circumstances, (2) recipes and rules of thumb, (3) a range of task-project combinations that are enjoined-ly or acceptably carried out for the sake of such prescribed or acceptable ends as preparing tasty foods, getting food on the table as quickly as possible, and securing quality family time.

When acting, a person carries on some practice(s) or other. This means that, during the course of her waking days, a person carries on a series of overlapping practices. Indeed, her days are more or less entirely spent engaged in various practices, though of course this is not all she is doing and she usually does not pay attention to the matter, instead attending to whatever in particular she is up to. To say that identity derives from practices is to say that people acquire their identities through participation in the open nexuses of action that compose practices, by way of acting on the understandings, in obeisance or disdain of the rules, for the sake of the ends, by way of carrying out the projects and tasks, and as gripped by the emotions and moods that help compose the specific practices particular individuals carry on. Identity also derives from practices in the further sense that people's identities depend both on interactions among practices and on mutual dependencies between, on the one hand, people's sense of self and, on the other, others' understanding of who they are, as these dependencies come to pass within practices.

To illustrate and explicate this thesis, I shall consider an example with which I am intimately acquainted, viz., the acquisition of identity by my four year old son Louis. As of the writing of this essay, Louis thinks of himself almost exclusively as a kid and, especially, as a big brother. He understands himself thus not because he is a kid and a big brother. He is in fact these, but these facts do not automatically qualify being a kid and being a big brother as (the content of) who he is. Louis understands himself as kid and big brother because these are the two identities that he has appropriated from those made available in the practices in which he participates. The practices involved include childrearing practices, cooking practices, hygiene practices, play practices, and school practices. Given that these are the practices in which he participates, he could have thought of himself as, for example, a cook, as someone daddy disciplines, as someone who washes his hands, as someone who has learned to use the potty, as a lover of Clifford (the Big Red Dog), as the friend of Evan (our neighbor), as a preschool child, or as Rachel's student - these all being identities made available to him in these practices. Why, in particular, he thinks of himself as a kid and as a big brother, and not as any of the available

alternatives, is not at issue here. Rather, the points are, first, that the range of identities available to him is laid down by the practices in which he is involved; second, that which identities he adopts has to do with the way he differentially projects into and takes up the actions, understandings, rules, ends, projects, and emotions that compose those practices (and vice versa: how someone takes up a practice has much to do with his identity;⁵ indeed, someone's identity can affect how he participates in a wide range of practices); third, that Louis's identity has much to do with how practices interact, for instance, with the ways childrearing practices interact with play practices; and fourth, that his self-understanding also has much to do with how Louis is construed and understood by his parents and by the other kids and adults who carry on these practices. Vis-à-vis this fourth point, for instance, the fact that his parents and grandmother understand him as Helena's big brother is not irrelevant to his understanding himself as a big brother, as is the fact that two months after Helena's birth a big brother party was held for him, and that ever since then friends and neighbors have playfully referred to him as the big brother. I describe the causal relations at work here vaguely ("has much to do with," "is not irrelevant to") because little is understood about why particular children respond as they specifically do to the influences about them that help effect and affect them mentally.

The above points hold equally well of adults' self-understandings. The differences between adults and children in this regard derive from such facts as that adults participate in and have become acquainted with far more practices than have children, thus with the activities, objects, and identities these practices embrace, and the fact that identity is an evolving phenomenon, later identities depending on earlier ones in various ways. My self-understanding as a father, for instance, is tied to the childrearing and other practices that have taken shape in our household, to contemporary media practices that deliver endless information about the vicissitudes of fatherhood, to the considerable information about fathers garnered through conversational practices with friends and neighbors, and to the example of my father in the practices in which I was raised. My self-

understanding is constituted, in short, within the practices that criss-cross my existence.

The same overall point holds of others' understandings of Louis or me and of Louis' or my identity as a unique individual. Our identities as unique individuals, for instance, are displayed in the ways Louis or I carry on the practices in which he or I participate, the particular manners and combinations of acts that no one else duplicates but whose possibility and means are supplied by these practices. Just as practices offer Louis the possibility of understanding himself as a kid and as a big brother, Louis's uniqueness is something constituted, exhibited in, and keyed to the practices in which he participates - in the things he says and the manner in which he pursues particular ends, carries out certain tasks, acts in relation to particular rules, and so on. As for the identities society bestows on us, these are obviously constituted in those practices that encompass, link with, or focus on our lives; in Louis's case, the practices of play, dress, neighborhood interaction, formal education, child psychology, and media popularization to mention just a few. It is through how others perceive and relate to Louis when participating in these practices, as well as through how they perceive and relate to classes of children (boys, preschoolers etc.) when doing so, that Louis is constituted as, among other things, a good or bad natured fellow, a trendy or preppy dresser, a slow or quick learner, and/or a Ritalin or well-behaved child. Of course, any individual's life is tied to multiple practices, in each of which who he or she can be is partially constituted. Any individual's other-determined identity, consequently, is multiple, and there can be no guarantee that the different components will cohere or even be mutually compatible. Foreordained, therefore, are identity conflicts, wherein the different demands and impulses with which different identity components imbue people clash and are prioritized or ordered. This observation holds likewise of self-understandings, though to a lesser degree than it does of the understandings and construals that others have or make of individuals. And, of course, the possibility of self-understandings diverging from others' understandings guarantees the outbreak of conflicts among the demands, impulses, and expectations that individuals bear by virtue of the divergent understandings.

Amid this plurality, it often happens that one or a very small number of identity components are most central to who people are. Louis is a bit unusual in this regard. Being a big brother is by default the central component of his identity because, at present, that is pretty much the only way he thinks about himself. My own case is more typical in this regard, since I presently think of myself primarily as father and professor, other identities such as skier, lover of jazz, and fiction reader having taken a distinctive back seat. To say that self-identity X is central to who someone is is to say either that the person lives his life primarily out of an understanding of himself as X or that the person's additional identity components depend on his being X. For example, it is because I am father that I discipline Louis, being a father thus being central in relation to being a discipliner. Being a father currently lies at the center of my identity also in the first sense of centrality: how I proceed day-to-day depends strongly on my understanding of myself as father. Vis-à-vis the identities in which others ensnare us, centrality is a matter of the obstinacy, decisiveness, and pervasiveness with which particular identities are foisted upon people either within specific practices or across them. The modalities of insistence and decisiveness in this context are manifold and lie beyond the ken of the present discussion. Many conflicts, incidentally, between self-understandings and those imposed on people occur between the central elements of these identities.

3. What Identity is Not

Construing identity as a form of understanding, as who someone understands herself to be and who others understand her to be, resembles two accounts of identity that have received extensive attention in the humanistic and social scientific literature: roles and subject positions. Differentiating understandings from these will further clarify the nature of identity.

A person's identity was once thought to consist primarily in his or her roles, where a role is typically thought of as something like a bundle of expected activities and attitudes that different individuals can take up. Examples of roles are father, child, big brother, friend,

neighbor, child psychologist, and trendy dresser. It should be immediately obvious that the range of who someone can either understand herself or be understood to be is broader than the range of roles that he or she can occupy. Bad natured fellow, well-mannered child, lover of vanilla ice cream, and African-American are not roles. They can become roles when what is involved in being one becomes regularized, standardized, and regulated through social sanction. This regularization and normativization, however, often do not occur, and a person can appropriate any of these identities without it becoming a role that the person involved occupies. Identity qua self-understanding is a relatedness to oneself, and it is completely open in principle (though rarely in fact) which aspect of oneself is that to which one relates in the way of understanding oneself to be it, thereby anointing it as one's identity. Roles are only one type of such aspect. Because, moreover, many of the aspects of oneself that a person can understand herself to be impose few demands or impulses on her, sizable numbers of such aspects can be part of a person's identity. Identity, as a result, boasts a complexity that a person's array of roles cannot match. Whereas the attributes definitive of identity are almost limitless, the expectations definitive of roles are such that a person can occupy only so many.

Part of the superiority of self- and others' understanding over roles as an account of identity lies in this greater flexibility and variety. Identity, in addition, does not succumb to various difficulties that beset the notion of roles. For example, although there might exist some flexibility as to how someone carries out a particular role, there is little flexibility in roles themselves, that is, in the activities and attitudes that are expected of incumbents of them. This inflexibility has two components, definiteness and inalterableness: the expectations that define roles have usually been treated as definite and inalterable (and for this reason networks of roles have sometimes been theorized as a component of social structure). These expectations have also often been treated as the objects of consensus. Identities are free of these constrictions. No specific activities and attributes need be exhibited by someone who is such and such; Louis, for example, does not need to exhibit any particular activities and attitudes in order for big brother to be his identity. Ideas, norms, and consensuses on this matter might be

afloat in the practices in which he predominantly lives out being a big brother, but these do not define his being this. Being a big brother is something that Louis, like most if not all big brothers, works out for himself by living it. How a person lives his self-identity is limited only by the organizations of and connections among the practices in which she participates, and these organizations (understandings, rules, teleoaffective spaces, which include ideas and norms) and connections are considerably less limiting or constraining than are the expectations that constitute roles. Consequently, what being a big brother amounts to can easily and quickly change, both in the life of a given individual and in society at large in tandem with successions of big brothers. The organizations of and connections among practices simply prefigure the forms of change and the celerity at which it occurs.

A second prominent account of identity is the poststructuralist notion of a subject position. The basic thrust behind this notion is ontological, namely, that the human subject, or self, is not a substantial, self-contained entity that possesses identity among its various properties. The subject, instead, comes into being through the immersion of a person (or a human body) in social phenomena, and it is composed of nothing but the different pieces of identity, the different positions afforded it by these phenomena. The subject, in other words, is nothing substantial; it is an organized mosaic of positions in - and supplied by - social phenomena, whether the latter be discourses, social structures, abstract matrices, or practices.

Michel Foucault's notion of the positions of subjectivity is the original version of this notion.⁶ Positions of subjectivity are defined as positions that subjects occupy with regard to objects and object domains, for example, observer, teacher, and questioner. Ontologically, positions of subjectivity are discursive statuses made available to people insofar as they participate in discourses. Foucault's analysis of subject positions as discursive statuses has underlain a series of poststructural analyses of identity as a discursive phenomenon. Since there are many interpretations of discursivity and of its relations to language and to practices, divergent accounts of discursive identity abound. What I want to point out here is that identity must not be construed

primarily as a linguistic phenomenon. There are two typical ways in which subject positions are taken to be linguistic entities.

The first is to treat them as words: A subject position is a linguistic expression that is used to designate either a status that people can occupy or a way of being which they can identify.⁷ On this rendering, who someone is, someone's meaning, is constituted by the meaning or interpretation of the word used to state or mention who that person is. Identity, as a result, is a linguistic affair, a matter of either being the referent of certain linguistic expressions or identifying with what these expressions designate. Identity, however, should not be so closely tied to words and their meanings/interpretations. Although I (or Louis) have to use a linguistic expression, "kid" or "big brother," to say or think who Louis is, who Louis is qua kid or big brother is hardly exhausted by the meaning of these words, by their application to Louis, or by Louis's identification with them. These words' meaning and use considerably underdetermine and underspecify who he is as a kid and as a big brother. To have identity X cannot be to occupy a subject position if occupying such a position simply means either being the referent of or identifying with the expressions substituting for "X."

A second overly linguistic interpretation of identity is to treat the occupation of subject positions purely as a discursive affair. A good example is found in Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré's analysis of positioning as a conversational phenomenon.⁸ According to Davies and Harré, who a person is is composed of that person's positions. Occupying positions, moreover, is a matter of how people take up and are located in them both in their own and others' talk and in their own and others' interpretation of others' speech acts and talk. On this interpretation, consequently, identity is constituted conversationally. However, who someone is is constituted not just in talk, his own and others', but instead in the full range of actions that he performs and that are performed toward him. What Louis is qua big brother is not adequately conceived as established in his talk about being a big brother, the verbal responses that this talk elicits, and the verbal acts that elicit his talk about being a big brother. Who he is as a big brother is established in a fuller array of discursive and nondiscursive acts performed

both by him and by those around him, above all, his parents and younger sister. Understanding himself as a big brother, in amalgamation with being understood as such, is a dense reality that Louis and his family live, live through, and cope with as they continually act and interact on a daily basis.

All in all, having an identity is not simply a matter of words: identities are not mere words (or concepts) that designate identities, nor are they discursive products that arise solely from the talk and conversation that occur as part of the flow of daily life. Rather, identities are practice phenomena that arise from, and rebound on, the discursive as well as nondiscursive moments and dimensions of practices.

4. Identity, Mind, and Society

To conclude, I return to the claim announced in the introduction, that identity both as a state of life and as social phenomena is rooted in practice. Identity is a psychological fact insofar as who people are lies in both their understandings of themselves and others' understandings of them. Since self-understandings and understandings of others invariably involve attitudes, thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, expectations, and almost as automatically desires, hopes, fears, wishes and other affective and conative conditions, identity is a far richer psychological phenomena than has been indicated in the present discussion. As for sociality, identity qua others' understandings is eo ipso a social phenomenon, a matter of how the surrounding social world perceives and cognizes oneself. Identity qua self-understanding is likewise overtly social insofar as one's understanding of oneself is entangled with others' understanding of this.

There is a deeper and more pervasive sense, however, in which identity is a social phenomena. As discussed in the second section above, identities of both sorts derive from people's participation in practices: both self-understanding and people's understandings of others arise in the course, and through the carrying on, of the practices in which those involved participate. Practices, however, are social phenomena. To participate in one is to be immersed in an extensive tissue

of coexistence that embraces varying sets of people, from those partaking in given interactions to all those who carry on the practice. In carrying on play practices, for instance, Louis coexists with his sister, with his sister and his father, and with all children and adults carrying on the practice. Practices are social also because their organizations are expressed in the nexuses of actions, performed by different people, that compose them, as opposed to the constituent actions performed by any given participant involved.⁹ In any event, because practices are social entities, and because identities are instituted and appropriated within practices, identity is a social phenomenon.

Since what is instituted and appropriated when identities are instituted and appropriated in practices is something partly psychological, this is another case of mind being instituted within a social matrix. I do not deny, indeed, I affirm that biological and physiological factors might sometimes help determine which identities certain people adopt, and which identities people foist on certain others. Whether and how this takes place is still poorly understood. Biological and physiological factors might also be partly responsible for what in particular is grasped when someone is understood as X, for instance, for some of what is pervasively entailed in understanding oneself as a father, mother, or, for that matter, big brother. Generally speaking, however, the range of identities that can be adopted, what is involved in adopting and acting on them, and the content of the identities thus lived are all determined in the social realm, the realm of social practices. In being a denizen of practice, identity is thus an affair of the social.

Notes

¹ This essay is dedicated to Arno Heller, who was a splendid social and intellectual host during my stay in Graz during the summer 2001 semester.

² For social psychological defenses of a similar thesis, see R.P. McDermott, "The Acquisition of a Child by a Disability," *Understanding Practice: Perspectives on Activity and Context*. Ed. Seth Chaiklin and Jean Lave. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 269-305; and Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. I will not examine these accounts in the following.

³ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

⁴ This thesis also undergirds Adorno's moral reflections on human life, e.g., Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, E.B. Ashton (tr), New York: Continuum Press, 1973.

⁵ The organizations of practices, for example, can be articulated by reference to identities; rules, for instance, can identify those who are to obey or administer or enforce them, and ends and projects can be assigned to certain identities. A number of rules in our family's play practices, for instance, refer to big brothers or little sisters.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, A. M. Sheridan-Smith (tr), New York: Harper and Row, 1976, Part II, Chapter 4.

⁷ An example of the latter is found in Chantal Mouffe, "Feminism, Citizenship, and Radical Democratic Politics," *Feminists Theorize the Political*. Ed. Judith Butler and Joan Scott. New York: Routledge, 1992, 369-84..

⁸ Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré, "Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 20, 1 (1990), 43-63.

⁹ For discussion of the sociality of practices, see my book, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Exploration of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002, chapter two.

Crossing the Atlantic for the Screen

Sonja Bahn-Coblans

The question of who or what is American is perennial. It is common knowledge that the US is primarily a country of immigrants. With the passing of time, political events, cultural developments, social problems, and economic vicissitudes, the concept of who or what is American changes, and not only because of the immigrant influx. Those entering the country were in search of what they hoped to find. In waves they either attempted to assimilate and lose their origins, or they tried to have the best of both worlds, their cultural origins *and* their new-home culture, or they developed enclaves of determined retainers of their unique backgrounds within the context of American society.

Since film is a mass medium and, in the US, gradually developed into a full-fledged big-business industry in Hollywood from the 1920s onwards, American films have contributed in no small way to presenting audiences with many of the images intended and used to define who or what is American. The very nature of film with its possibility of editing, splicing, post-synchronizing, and creating special effects offers endless possibilities of fantasizing, manipulating, and creating ideal worlds with conviction and emotional involvement that offer audiences a chance to imagine, emulate or reflect on a diversity of 'real' worlds and images, heroes and heroines.

Through the widespread enthusiasm for the movies until the rise of television in the 1950s, films were the main source of entertainment, and the studios made sure that the stars of their films were the heroes and heroines of the masses. The way they looked, the way they moved, and the way they dressed became the guiding line for everyone who wanted to be American. With the decline of the studio system in the late 1950s and the rise of an independent cinema, it became more difficult to create widely accepted idols.

From the beginnings of Hollywood at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century right up until today, the film industry has largely been dominated by European immigrants. After the middle of the century there was a small flow of American directors who found that working in Europe was, for various reasons, more rewarding than working in the United States.

I would like to show how crossing the Atlantic to make films in Hollywood in some cases made the directors more aware of what they saw in America, and the Americans more aware of themselves and what they stood for (Billy Wilder); in others it made the Europeans more aware of how different they were from the Americans and how their perspectives were strange, foreign to American audiences (Louis Malle). Going in the opposite direction, those Americans who went to Europe to make films became more aware of who they were, but also of the strengths and weaknesses of their home country (Stanley Kubrick).

The choice of directors was determined by the realization that Wilder became absorbed into American culture and worked from within to find Americanness; Malle observed American culture closely, with affection and understanding, but never tried to become American; and Kubrick used England as a base in order to have more control over all stages of his filmmaking but did not, for one moment, shake off his American origins.

Billy Wilder (1906-2002) was among a number of European filmmakers who escaped from Nazism to the US. Unknown in America when he arrived in New York in 1933, he brought with him scriptwriting and filmmaking experience from working for UFA in Berlin and then in Paris. He started in the script department of Paramount with Charles Brackett, with whom he worked for twelve years. However, it soon became clear to him that the land of the free was not so free, that screenwriters were just a cog in the wheel and got little recognition from directors and producers ("[...] in Hollywood, when you're a writer, you're just a pisher," Wilder in Prelutsky 168). From being 'just' a writer, he began to direct his own screenplays at Paramount in 1942 to make sure that his texts were not botched up and,

when he was too irked by the restrictions of Paramount studio rules, moved on to become an independent director and producer in Hollywood.

Wilder's films usually ended up being a combination of genres which were all acceptable as elements of the Hollywood film but which, with him, went beyond the Hollywood rules. By adding his own brand of irony and cynical humor that were new, and by exposing the fixed morals and attitudes of the American public, Wilder poked fun at and, at the same time, created awareness for what he was satirizing, a situation which did not always please the authorities, whether they were Hollywood (*Sunset Boulevard*, 1950), the church (*Lost Weekend*, 1945; *The Seven Year Itch*, 1955), or journalists (*The Big Carnival/Ace in the Hole*, 1951). He also tackled delicate issues, such as alcoholism, prostitution, homosexuality, transvestism, and planted such topics more squarely into the minds of the general population. Any form of humor, if it works, will have its effect, because the masses need to laugh in order to allow taboos to surface:

Billy Wilder has focussed a keen eye on American absurdity and cruelty, and displayed a master storyteller's skill at depicting those absurdities, sometimes bitter, sometimes sweet. He did so with intelligence, clarity, and affection. (Langman 115)

For some critics, *Some Like It Hot* (1959) is one of Wilder's best films: "pivotal" (Bell-Metereau 25), "sensational" (Maltin 1291), "one of the enduring treasures" (Ebert), "one of the most hilarious, raucous films" (Dirks), "a brilliantly funny and brilliantly made farce" (Higham 103), "the funniest American film of the 1950s and one of the greatest of the genre" (Tomlinson 939).

Taking the gangster film, the romantic comedy, and slapstick as genres, prohibition, sex, cross-dressing, and implied homosexuality as themes, Wilder combines them in a way that made the Hollywood moguls shake their heads in horror: "Oh my God, you're not doing a comedy with *murder*? They're going to crucify you. They're going to walk out in *droves*! It's just going to be *embarrassing*" (David O. Sel-

znick, qtd. by Wilder in Crowe 161). Together with I.A.L. Diamond (his second longstanding scriptwriting collaborator after Charles Brackett) he worked on the script, based on a popular but "very low-budget, very third-class" (Wilder in Crowe 160) German film of 1951, *Fanfaren der Liebe*, and engaged stars with box-office appeal: Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, and, above all, Marilyn Monroe.

With his usual need for logic, Wilder had to find a cogent reason for the two men to disguise as women, so that the St. Valentine's Day Massacre became the vital frame with which Wilder had his own kind of witty fun and biting sarcasm. George Raft parodies his earlier performance and is confronted with his own flipping of the coin from *Scarface* (1932); the grabbing of the grapefruit at the Italian Opera Convention suggests James Cagney's grapefruit squashing in *Public Enemy* (1931); Nehemiah Persoff mirrors Edward G. Robinson's Rico from *Little Caesar* (1930). All these were references to classic gangster films and a reversal of the heroic gangster image of the Thirties. In this context they are seen from a different, 'comic' perspective through the eyes of two musicians (Curtis/Joe & Lemmon/Jerry) who have to escape if they want to survive after unwillingly witnessing the shooting. In drag they join an all-girl band whose singer, Sugar, is Monroe.

Monroe's first appearance on the screen is a stroke of genius. As the two men try to master walking in high heels, she waltzes along the platform, her femininity taken as the most natural thing in the world.



1 legs of Lemmon & Curtis



2 legs of Monroe

The camera focuses on her legs and curves so that Jerry/Lemmon's amazed comment, "Look how she moves! That's just like Jello-O on springs! [...] I tell you it's a whole different sex!" (transcribed from the film), becomes one of the many standard quotations from the film.

Unlike earlier films that dared to use drag, *Some Like It Hot* makes full use of the comic elements as well as the serious implications of cross-dressing. As Douglas Brode says in his discussion of the film, "If drag was not new to movies, the attitude toward drag was" (284). Wilder explores with greater sensitivity than ever before what it means to switch gender and roles. Both male leads go further than just dressing with the knowledge that basically they are men. They learn a little of what it is to be a woman; Jerry/Lemmon even thinks he can become one. Joe/Curtis, in his keenness to win Sugar, 're-disguises' as a millionaire with a yacht and a Cary Grant accent, another reference to an icon of popular appeal, and perhaps intended as a dig at the idols of young women of the 1950s. It was also a way for Wilder to get his own back on Grant, who never made a film with him, even though they were friends and Wilder had tried to convince him to take a part in *Sabrina* (1954), and again in *Love in the Afternoon* (1957) (cf. Wilder in Crowe 9, 12).

The film gives its audience a hilarious and witty look at itself. An overtly high-collared but subversively sensuous US society is taken to task at a point in history when the studio system is on the decline but the Production Code is still valid, i.e. a point when the social surface and the underground counter-culture are vying with each other. Through the verve and pace, through the camera angles and cuts, Wilder has one transvestite join high society by 'cross-dressing' again as a wealthy, impotent gallant, and in doing so, he finds out that the superficiality of his tycoon persona is superfluous, that love is something deeper. During the film Curtis comes full circle, moving from being poor, male (Joe) to poor, female (Josephine), to rich, male but impotent (Shell Oil, Jr.), back to poor, female, and finally to poor, male. For the other transvestite, the film explores the ramifications of a man who throws himself into his role as a woman

with such enthusiasm that he becomes completely absorbed in it and even agrees to marry his admirer. Lemmon moves from poor, male (Jerry) to poor, female (first Geraldine, then Daphne), and finally back to poor, male, but without any effect on his millionaire admirer (Osgood), who simply accepts the situation as it is in the hilarious last seconds of the film.

Wilder and Diamond's witty, bittersweet, sparkling dialogue was perhaps determined by the two personalities rather than the typical humor of Hollywood films. Wilder's way of coming on obliquely and leaving time between the lines is something which Hollywood directors must have envied him for, and which reminds one strongly of Ernst Lubitsch's impeccable sense of timing as well as of the popular entertainment traditions of comedy in Europe. A particularly good example of this is the scene where Daphne/Jerry/Lemmon lies on the bed after spending the evening dancing tango with Osgood/Joe E. Brown. He is in the clouds and rapturously tells Joe/Curtis that he is engaged to be married. The pacing of this scene is brilliant. By playing the maracas, Daphne/Jerry/Lemmon ensures that every line can be heard and reacted to by the audience: an exasperated 'straight' line from Curtis followed by a punchline from Lemmon, who then has to create a few seconds for the audience to register what is going on before Joe/Curtis can continue:

Jerry: I'm engaged!

Joe (in his Shell Oil, Jr. clothes): Congratulations. Who's the lucky girl?

Jerry: I am (**sings and shakes the maracas**).

Joe: What?

Jerry: Osgood proposed to me. We're planning a June wedding (**sings, shakes**).

Joe: What are you talking about? You can't marry Osgood!

Jerry (**getting up from the bed**): You think he's too old for me?

Joe: Jerry, you can't be serious.

Jerry: Why not? He keeps marrying girls all the time (**sings, dances, shakes**).

Joe: But, but, you're not a girl. You're a guy. And why would a guy want to marry a guy?

Jerry: Security! (**dances, shakes**).

Joe: Jerry, you better lie down. You're not well.

Jerry: Will you stop treating me like a child? I'm not stupid. I know there's a problem.

Joe: I'll say there is.

Jerry: His mother. We need her approval. [...]

(transcribed, emphasis mine)

Jerry/Lemmon is so impressed with his image as a woman that he does not even realize what Joe/Curtis is getting at. He has, in a sense, become a woman and reacts accordingly, a completely new situation in a Hollywood movie, and dangerously close to censorship. Out of line with the classic Hollywood romantic comedy of 'boy meets girl, boy gets girl' Wilder plays around with the gender equations and ends up with Hollywood 'normality' in that Shell Oil, Jr. becomes Joe/Curtis and has his girl without his disguise, and Daphne becomes Jerry/Lemmon again. However, the twist lies in that final punchline from Osgood/Brown, proving that Osgood/Brown is perfectly amenable to having a male partner.

Some Like It Hot abounds in clever combinations and interminglings, but they are not only verbal. Visually, Wilder also stretches the acceptable for Hollywood regulations as much as possible. The scene on the yacht with Sugar/Monroe having her try at breaking down Shell Oil, Jr.'s (Joe/Josephine) impotence and Joe/Curtis' foot rising in sexual arousal is cross-edited with the tango dancing of Jerry/Lemmon with Osgood/Brown, where they exchange a rose from mouth to mouth. At the end of this cross-editing the men, Shell Oil, Jr. and Osgood, are both completely bowled over by their 'girls', Sugar and Daphne, and the gangster element is again introduced with the Italian Opera Convention convening at the hotel. This part of the film is both a parody of rival Mafia gangster bosses and a spoof of slapstick comedy in which the two musicians are fighting for their lives. "You don't mix genres," says Wilder in an interview with Volker Schlöndorff and Hellmuth Karasek in 1992 (cf. Schlöndorff & Grishow) and, although one is tempted to say that he does just that in this film, it is in fact not the case. The gangster element is the driving force for the romantic comedy and the two musicians are the common factor, but basically

the two do not mix; they just propel each other forward. The film is thus carefully structured so that the two elements hardly meet or, at the most, just rub each other's backs: gangster film until the musicians leave Chicago → romantic comedy until the two pairs have established themselves → gangster film until the shooting at the convention and the chase after the two musicians → romantic comedy, the final sequence.

On the surface the role-switching from man to woman, woman to man, and the reversal of roles in which the woman takes the initiative while the man is passive ('impotent'), make it impossible to talk of identities as such but, in the end, there is a question of identity which becomes important. Jerry/Lemmon has clearly let out his repressed alter ego with such abandon that the viewer is invited to ask where he belongs, or simply accepts that he is a 'woman,' in the 1950s a rather daring proposition which probably horrified the traditional members of society but gave a sense of relief to the more progressive ones. For there is little doubt that Osgood/Brown will not give up his plan to marry, and what Jerry/Lemmon will do is left completely open!

For those who have trouble 'identifying' with Curtis and/or Lemmon there is, of course, Monroe (Sugar). She certainly goes further than being just a bombshell:

[...] it was by spoofing the dumb blonde image she had created that Monroe finally won the blessings of the press. *Variety* hailed her as "a comedienne with that combination of sex appeal and timing that just can't be beat." (Brode 284)

Her body language and her movements make her sexually desirable for almost every male, but she also has traits that were not approved of in the 50s: her drinking and her clothes. What she wears is distinctly erotic and goes further than was acceptable in revealing her body underneath the gauzy shimmer or the deep décolleté. The gowns she wears for the two songs she sings are similar in that they both reveal her voluptuous body and hide it at the same time. Wilder films the scenes on stage with a spotlight that puts her bust tantalizingly in the shadow but, as she moves up and down, with the spotlight and camera

following her movements, the viewer has a glimpse, but just a glimpse, of her nipples, which are, in fact, covered with lace. For the first song "I wanna be loved by you" the dress is flesh-colored, making it doubly daring, especially when, at the end of the song, she turns to move out of the spotlight and shows her completely bare back. With "I'm thru with love" she is in black, and again the spotlight plays with her body suggestively. Sexuality jumps at the viewer in both scenes. Monroe made full use of the possibilities of her role, and Wilder left it to her, knowing that she had a perfect sense of timing and felt very much at ease in such situations, unlike in those scenes where she only had short sentences, which she found impossible to get right and to time well. Some of them took up to eighty retakes (cf. Wilder in Crowe 164). What Wilder did not leave to her was the decision to make the film in black and white, which was unusual at that time, since technicolor was the craze. Monroe had at first insisted that she looked better in color but Wilder was able to convince her that the two men in drag looked simply awful!

The final sequence is another moment in the film where Wilder has his fun with the audience.



3 Hollywood ending



4 Wilder ending

The four have escaped from the gangsters and are in Osgood's boat. In the back of the boat, Sugar and Joe declare their love, the typical Hollywood happy end, 'boy meets girl; boy falls for girl; boy gets girl.'

This is without doubt the way romantic comedies would have ended. But, in opposition to the Hollywood norm, Wilder had to end it differently. In the front of the boat, Osgood is sitting next to Daphne and complacently discusses his future with her, while she feels more and more uncomfortable. After a rapid repartee, Daphne suddenly rips off her wig and confesses to being a man, to which Osgood simply comments with the famous final punchline, "Nobody's perfect!" that has gone down in film history, but which Wilder and Diamond originally used as a stopgap to be improved on, but they never did. This foreground shifts the emphasis and jolts the audience into rethinking its moral stance.

In *Some Like It Hot*, Wilder works with the Hollywood genres but, through clever dialogue, the contrasting drive of the plot, the treatment of cross-dressing and role-playing, modifies the tradition, puts a new perspective on the screen and holds a mirror up to American society of the 1950s. It hits home because of the wit and humor which disarms his audience into seeing things slightly differently. The Austro-Hungarian scriptwriter, director, and producer thus becomes one of the leading Hollywood filmmakers but also manages to call American attitudes into question.

Louis Malle (1932-1995) represents a variation on the topic of Europeans going to the US to make films and to grapple with American culture. Those Europeans who were born in the 1930s were confronted with the United States in a very different way from those before the war: With the post-World War II recovery programs came an inundation of American popular culture to fill the gap created in the entertainment world as well as in other spheres. Seen in the context of film, this meant that countless Hollywood productions, regardless of quality, were shown all over Europe and imprinted in young Europeans a specific image of the US which led them to envision and hope for a world of freedom and mobility, of beauty and wealth, of success and individualism, in short, the American Dream.

This image and Louis Malle's desire to see for himself had already driven him to visit the States from the mid-1950s onward. His films had been shown in the States, but he was of a category apart. For his fellow countrymen, the Americans, and the world in general, he did not fit into any slot, and the diversity of his oeuvre never ceased to create controversial reactions and discussions. Although a precursor and an inspiration to the French New Wave in the late 1950s with his first film, *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (1957), he did not really belong to those who were part of it, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, and Eric Rohmer. They were writers and journalists for the *Cahiers du cinema*, whereas he was a leading underwater cameraman (for Jacques Cousteau) who began his career as a technician and not as a film critic (cf. Maerker 30). There was also some doubt about his being an *auteur* filmmaker because he did not conform with the *auteur* theory; his films nevertheless had a distinctly recognizable Malle touch; as he himself said, the *Nouvelle Vague* was not a coherent, homogeneous movement anyway. It was a group of very diverse filmmakers who wanted to give new life to French cinema in the 1950s (cf. Wittlich). As one of the best five directors in French cinema, Malle felt he was beginning to stagnate as an artist by the end of the 1960s and needed to break out to extend his horizon. All his life curiosity was the force that drove him to keep on the move and to try out things he had not done before. He first went to India and then, after making several films in France again, moved to the United States in 1976, where he already had a name for being iconoclastic and rebellious in his filming methods and film topics (*Les amants*, 1958, was forbidden in some US states because of its graphic sex scenes). His first American film, *Pretty Baby* (1978), was once again a provocation in that it dealt with child prostitution, starring the twelve-year-old Brooke Shields and set in Storyville, the red-light district of New Orleans as seen by E.J. Bellocq in the early 20th century. It was at Paramount, which produced *Pretty Baby*, that Malle realized that, although he knew "things move very slowly in the American film industry" (Malle in French 118) and although he was given the assurance that he was his own producer (cf. Malle in French 118), things were done

differently and control over every step (which was taken for granted by *auteur* directors in France) was not in his hands in the States.

Atlantic City (1980), Malle's second feature film on the American continent, was financed with taxshelter money from Canada on condition that the majority of those involved were Canadians. The main roles, however, were given to Americans. Originally Malle wanted Robert Mitchum for the aging would-be gangster Lou, but the Canadians insisted that Burt Lancaster was the better draw, and Lancaster proved his worth, creating one of his most remarkable film characters, complex, ironical, sensitive, elegant. Malle cast Susan Sarandon, with whom he had already worked in *Pretty Baby*, in the role of Sally. She gave the character strength, inner fire, natural sexiness, and beauty so that Sarandon came into her own as a first-rate and worthy opposite to the silver screen legend Lancaster.

The starting point for the making of the film was, however, not a story but a city. Situated on the East coast, Atlantic City had seen better days: Once a popular sea resort with large elegant hotels dotted along the beach and the mecca for beautiful girls competing in the annual Miss America contests from the 1920s to the 50s, it had fallen into decay and, by the 60s was more or less a ghost town. The Casino Gambling Referendum in 1976 legalized gambling in the state of New Jersey, so that Atlantic City was at a new turning point in its history. Malle had completed *Pretty Baby* (1978) and was on his way back to New York after filming the first part of his documentary *God's Country* (1985) in Minnesota. Together with John Guare (who wrote the screenplay for *Atlantic City*) he went to have a look at the resuscitating Atlantic City and found that:

[t]he contrasts were astonishing. They had refurbished the Boardwalk, but you could walk three blocks and you'd be in the middle of the worst slum, mostly black population. And there was this craziness; they were building new casinos and they were pulling down all the great old buildings of the 1920s. [...] We [Malle and Guare] were trying to combine the old and the new. The character of Lou, the Burt Lancaster character, represents the old, glamorous Atlantic City. [...] and Susan Sarandon's character, who lived in the same building, rep-

resented the people coming from all over America with their dreams. For both of us, it was very obviously a metaphor for America itself. (Malle in French 126-127)

The film that resulted out of this visit turned out to be Malle's most successful film in America. It opens with a legendary, "unforgettable" (Tucker) sensual scene with Susan Sarandon at the window, topless, rubbing her arms, chest, and neck with lemon juice to an aria from *Norma*:



5 Sarandon sensuously rubbing lemon juice into her skin

What is so striking is the suddenness of the opening: a brightly lit close-up of lemons, a sharp knife quartering them, and a hand that moves towards a radio. The camera withdraws; the image darkens; Sarandon slowly peels off her undershirt, squeezes the lemon into her palm, and rubs the juice into her skin. The camera withdraws further; the image darkens more, and the viewer sees she is standing at a win-

dow, framed by it, and completely absorbed in her activity. The camera zooms further back and, almost invisible, Burt Lancaster can just be seen to the right peeping at her from the window opposite in the darkness of the night: a stark, very suggestive beginning to a film, followed by a completely contrasting daylight sequence initiating the narrative, the drug dealer story, which keeps the plot going and acts as a sort of prologue to the film. After the credits the camera zooms in on Atlantic City, which then becomes the backbone to the plot. Scenes of the developments in the city are ever present, and demolition frames the film proper at the beginning with an imploding hotel, and at the end with a wrecking ball nagging at the façade of an apartment building.



6 implosion of a large luxury hotel of the 1920s

Atlantic City and thus also the film *Atlantic City* are about the fulfilment of dreams but with the twist that, ironically, the fulfilment is a powerful but fleeting fantasy. Basically, three dreams are being

dreamt. The others are less influential on the film and serve to pad out the events.

The first of the three is Lou's (Burt Lancaster). It is the dream of a romantic who has fallen in love with a woman much younger than himself whom he observes and tries to win. At the same time he is also a nostalgic, dapper old man who would have liked to have been a successful gangster in the early days of heroic gangsterdom (the 1920s and 30s) when gambling was illegal, who still dreams of all the great things he did even if only in his imagination, and who also yearns to have Sally next to him for the rest of his life.



7 Sarandon & Piccoli on the balcony of the casino

The second one is Sally's (Susan Sarandon). As an employee at the oyster bar of a casino she dreams of becoming the first woman croupier in Monte Carlo, after having learnt the tricks of the trade from a French teacher croupier (Michel Piccoli), who is also interested in this attractive woman from Saskatchewan and tries to cultivate an

elitist *savoir-faire* in her by teaching her classical opera and French in addition to dealing.

All of Sally's actions are orientated towards attaining the knowledge, behavior, and polish that would make it possible for her to become rich and successful in life. She is not interested in getting involved with anyone. An example of this is clearly shown in the way she pulls away from Joseph/Piccoli when he whispers 'sweet nothings' in her ear, as well as her behavior at the end of the film.



8 a real casino used for the fiction film

The third dream, probably the central one as far as Malle was concerned and certainly the dream that pervades the film, is the dream that Atlantic City dreams of becoming a popular, glamorous resort again: Demolish the old and build up the new; "Atlantic City: you're back on the map. Again" (transcribed). This ability to start again, to turn a new leaf, was a trait that impressed Malle greatly about America (cf. Wittlich). His experience with documentary filmmaking made

it easy for him to successfully introduce realistic images of the city which have little to do with the plot: "My obsession was to have Atlantic City ever present and to shoot as much as possible outside" (Malle in French 128). As a result he was constantly adjusting to what was actually happening in Atlantic City. He would change the location of a scene because he found out that a building was being demolished and he wanted to have the demolition in the background. Or, he moved the murder of the drug dealer from a hotel corridor to "the top of this bizarre parking place with elevators - an absurd structure I have never seen anywhere else. It was inconvenient, but it was typical of the place" (Malle in French 128). Left over from the early days and also "typical of the place" were the young girls crooning "On the boardwalk of Atlantic City," the rich donating money for hospital wings, and the older people paying tribute to the past while vast casinos rose like mushrooms out of the imploded hotel ruins, inviting tourists to spend their money at black jack, poker, roulette, etc.

The city had something dreamy, something mysterious, something decadent about it, which the film critics tended to call European: "a distinctly European flavour" (Frith), "very European" (O'Gorman), "a character-based European-style film" (Web).

It is the way Malle deals with the dreams that shows most clearly how the Frenchman sees America. After two years of living there, he felt he was a "fairly acute observer of the American scene" (Malle in French 127). There are several points in the film where he sets the stage for the 'American way' only to carry on the sequence differently. The scene of Lou's declaration of his infatuation in Sally's room is an example of this point: Lou confesses his peeping tom activities and asks her why she uses lemon juice. Her mundane answer that she wants to get rid of the smell of fish leaves him nonplussed, and for a moment we have the image of a dirty old man who, in the American approach, would have been thrown out of the room by Sally for spying on her.

But in European, French, or Malle manner, Sally undresses and sleeps with him, only to escape the next morning and set out on a new life. This is neatly done and again illustrates how differently Malle

and the American film star would like to deal with a situation: In Hollywood fashion Lancaster wanted to be the one to send Sarandon away, the one to take the decision, the one in control (cf. French 131). Malle did not agree: Sally has gained all she can from Lou and is clearly not attached to him, affectionate, merciful perhaps, but not involved. She pilfers his wallet in the same way as her dealer husband pilfered hers at the beginning and tries to sneak out on Lou, who, in fact, quickly realizes what is happening. In our last view of her she is sitting in the car stolen from the mobsters, who were the cause for her losing her job, and driving into the sunset to the sound of a radio program on French wines. The future is hers but because of the haziness, the colors, and the diagonal camera angle, it is implied that she will not get too far! Lou returns to his old friend (Kate Reid), very dignified, very much in charge, and very much in the spirit of the 'good old days'; the couple strolls down the Boardwalk while the wrecking ball nags at the façade of another building. "It was a bittersweet ending and very right" (Malle in French 131).

Like Wilder, Malle has an American beginning to the last sequence of the film and then turns in another direction which is no longer American, thus disappointing the expectations arising from the standard formula which would have had Lou and Sally go off to Monte Carlo together or Lou killed by the hoods and Sally happily dealing in Monte Carlo. With his ending Malle invites a new approach, a rethinking of the fixed patterns.

Unlike Wilder, with his sharp and brilliant one-liners, Malle develops the unusualness of the atmosphere and people from within the characters. Moreover, in line with Malle's interest in documenting the reality of Atlantic City's rise from the ashes, there is a clearly subdued, nostalgically dignified atmosphere throughout the film which intertwines the past with the future, the old with the new, age with youth.

Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999) was confronted with a very different situation from Louis Malle's. As an American-born, successful but controversial Hollywood director with five feature films behind him, he realized that without control over every step in his filmmaking he

could never make films the way he wanted to. After *Spartacus* was released in 1960, he decided to take measures to change matters. Already while filming the Roman epic, Kubrick and his producer, James Harris, were avidly reading Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and immediately decided to make a film of it. The novel had caused a furore in the literary world (similar to Joyce's *Ulysses* or Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*), was refused publication by four American publishers because it was too explicit about sex, then banned for two years once it came out in Paris in 1955, and only published in the US and Britain in 1958 and 1959 respectively (cf. Corliss 59). There is little need to comment here on the novel and its history. Suffice it to say that:

'Lolita' has become a recognizable word in the English language, having taken up a life of its own, with ever widening connotations and rarely if ever a reference to its literary progenitor. 'Lolita', the now word, is a term used to describe a certain type of young woman - usually a teenage girl with precocious sexual drive that proves ruinous to the life of a sinful older man. The word (often lower-cased to 'lolita') connotes badness for both sexes, but it is especially demeaning to women. (Santas)

Although the Lolita image crossed the Atlantic, it changed from a "teenage girl" to more of a child-woman image in Europe, for example with Brigitte Bardot and Catherine Deneuve in France and Sarah Miles and Julie Christie in Britain.

The true nymphet, however, remained primarily American - blue-jeaned, gum-chewing and naïve. She was not sexually innocent, but innocent in terms of her age and culture (or lack of it). She was cute rather than beautiful. [...] Her ideal of womanhood was the Barbie Doll [...] slick, long-legged, smooth, platinum-haired and eternally young. (Sinclair 105)

Once the preparations for *Lolita* were well underway, Kubrick and Harris had to find backing for the film in the States. Warner Bros said they would take the risk but only if they had complete control over everything, a situation Kubrick was not prepared to accept any more after his experiences with studio and producer interference with

Spartacus. When Seven Arts UK made a less restrictive offer, Kubrick and Harris agreed and decided to take on a second British actor (Peter Sellers), after James Mason, since shooting in England would then make them eligible for greater financial support (cf. Corliss 52, Hughes 91). The crew arrived in England in August 1960 and towards the end of the year started filming on the sets of Elstree Studios.

Since Kubrick wanted his film to be distributed in America, he was not in a position, even with complete artistic control, to take the sexually explicit parts of the novel too explicitly into consideration because of censorship which, at the time, would certainly have condemned or even prohibited the film. His artistic freedom was thus enormously curtailed because of the American distribution certificate; this shows that the only advantage of being in England to make films was financial. He had no other choice than to approach the story from a different angle.

Although officially the script of *Lolita* was written by Nabokov, Kubrick rewrote and shortened his 440-page manuscript to fit a feature film format. As with every adaptation, changes and omissions had to be made, but Kubrick was in fact radical and, for some critics, unfaithful to the book. He cut out the explanations; he ignored the overt sex (because of the MPAA and the Catholic Legion of Decency); he rearranged the chronology of the story (cf. Kern).

The result was a *Lolita* that divided the audiences and the critics, which was what usually happened to Kubrick's films anyway. At the time of its release ("How did they ever make a movie of *Lolita*?" was on the posters everywhere) people expected a steamy, pornographic film about a young teen and an obsessed, elderly professor and could not see the film on its own terms. In the States, the critics were negative both toward the novel and toward Kubrick's daring in adapting it. He had betrayed the original and failed to "create an equivalent style" (qtd. in Ciment 588):

'*Lolita* is the saddest and most important victim of the current reckless adaptation fad,' noted *Time*, while *Variety* called it 'an occasionally amusing but shapeless film ... like a bee from which the stinger has

been removed. It still buzzes with a sort of promising irreverence, but it lacks the power to shock, and, eventually, makes very little point either as comedy or satire.' [...] In the UK, the *Observer* headed its review '*Lolita* fiasco' and closed by saying that Nabokov's novel had been 'turned into a film about this poor English guy who is being given the runaround by this sly young broad.' (Hughes 99)

In fact, what the film shows is "the pleasures of indirection and deflection [...] the last great flowering of a whole cinematic language of the unsaid - the last triumph before the gates opened and censorship ended" (von Busack). It was this "language of the unsaid," the implied, the oblique, which critics did not appreciate at the time, but which was one of Kubrick's strengths.

Bringing the climax at the end of the novel to the beginning of the film so that the murder is committed before the pedophilia is introduced was more than just an attempt to placate the film distributors and Production Code inspectors. It also changed the emphasis from sombre obsession to dark, almost grotesque comedy. Humbert/James Mason (English professor of languages) and Quilty/Peter Sellers (TV playwright) face each other as rivals of *Lolita*/Sue Lyon before anyone knows anything about what has led up to the confrontation. For those who know the novel, this is a complete surprise; for those who do not, it is difficult to understand.

The dry, deadly serious English gentleman, who turns out to be 'degenerate' in his pedophilic leanings, shoots his foil, who has the same leanings but takes life more lightly. Sellers speaks with a Bronx accent (intimations of Kubrick, who otherwise gave Sellers complete freedom to improvise his text and create his own Quilty, thus expanding on Nabokov). Audiences, however, knew that these were two Englishmen, one, I suggest, representing the Old World, the other a Europeanized New World, a wishful imitation of the Old. The atmosphere and the setting, reminiscent of Kane's Xanadu in *Citizen Kane* (1941) and English Gothic, are dissolute, cluttered, and bombastic. In a sense there is a battle between the two worlds in a game of "Roman ping-pong": the Old (Humbert) suffering, wounded, vengeful, outraged,

threatening, pitiless; the New (Quilty) drunk, flippant, dissipated, scornful, teasing, babbling.



9 Quilty's 'castle': Mason & Sellers

After the credits a car drives through the fog and comes to a standstill in front of a mansion. Humbert enters what looks like the aftermath of an orgy: bottles, glasses, cigarette ends, paper, bowls scattered about a large baroque, over-decorated, cluttered hall with columns, statues, art objects everywhere and a ping-pong table in the middle. Very upright and dressed in a dark overcoat, he stalks around calling for Quilty, whom he clearly does not know. From behind a sheet over an armchair appears a slouching figure, Quilty, with the white sheet in toga-like fashion over his shoulder. "Shall we have a little chat before we start," (transcribed) Humbert says, pulling his gloves over his fingers. The content of their conversation is about Humbert's plan to kill Quilty after he has explained why.

Absurd and bizarre as this confrontation seems, it gives the film its élan and its dark comedy. In a different tone and in a different way it captures the aims, the depth, the critique, the sense of humor of the original, and, in a nutshell, transposes the verbal richness and effusiveness, the long treatises and descriptions in prose into a ten-minute

scene where the music takes on the passionate emotion and the genre evocations of Hollywood westerns, epics, romances, slapstick comedies, and thrillers correspond to the pop culture and literary references in Nabokov's novel.

The rest of the film is a flashback starting with a caption "4 years earlier" and leading up to the murder of the opening sequence. The beginning of the flashback brings the two Americans on screen: Shelley Winters/Charlotte Haze and Sue Lyon/Lolita, each in her own way somewhat naïve, somewhat sex-obsessed, and in a sense representative of the female New World. It is clear that Kubrick does not have much sympathy for Charlotte Haze. She is one of those dominating, sex-starved mothers who thinks she is worldly and knowledgeable. Kubrick's attitude toward Lolita is more ambivalent, probably because he was not able to develop her nymphetic side. He compromised by steering clear of the sex aspect, but primarily she is older (and thus, in some states, marriageable) and less lolita-like than in Nabokov's version.

Seen in broader terms, Humbert's obsession with Lolita is a confrontation of the intellectual with the innocent, age with youth, but, in mutually interchangeable fashion, also weakness with strength, victim with victimizer.

The highly cultured Old World is infatuated with the wide-open New World. Kubrick builds up this bubble and then bursts it in the film chronology by having Quilty shot dead through a Gainsborough-style painting, then Charlotte killed in a car accident, and, in the end, Lolita married to a worker and pregnant. But it is Humbert who is the tragic loser on all counts and who discovers the meaning of love and affection too late in the day.

Preparing for this, the opening credits (created by a British firm) are superimposed onto a girl's left foot which descends from the top right hand corner to the sound of rippling piano arpeggios ("Rarely has bad music been used to such good effect," Kern). From the left comes a man's left hand and gently holds the foot:



10 opening credits: the painting of toenails

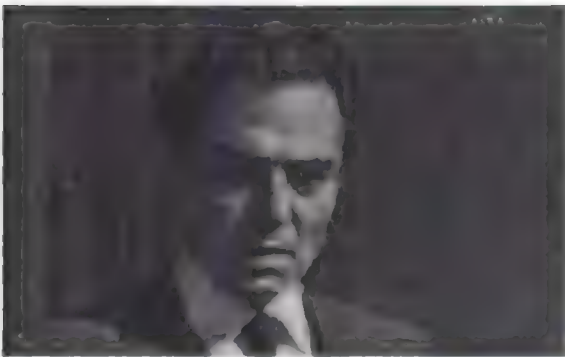
A right hand slowly and meticulously paints one toenail after the other, placing small wads of cottonwool between each toe. This is a scene full of subtle eroticism and suggestive sensuality, establishing the relationship between Humbert and Lolita without identifying either of them, and expressing more than overt sex could ever do. It stands for the whole film in that it posits both the passion, enslavement, and absorption as well as the love, tenderness, and devotion.

Later in the film this scene is individualized when Humbert paints Lolita's toenails, only the effect of the second scene is completely different because of the heated discussion the two are having, and also because of the loss of mystery and anonymity. The parallel is obvious, and the foreshadowing gesture of nail painting indicates in retrospect that there is more behind the nymphet and pedophile than meets the eye, at least on the part of Humbert.

Another disappointment for Nabokov fans is the first appearance of Lolita at the beginning of the flashback, after the credits and the confrontation. After a lengthy conversation with Charlotte Haze about the virtues of living in her house, Humbert follows her into the garden,

is caught unawares by the sight of Lolita stretched out on the lawn, stares, and then decides after all to take the room because of that 'vision.' Unfortunately, this 'vision' dominated the early discussions of the film, and Sue Lyon's interpretation of Lolita became one of the main points of criticism.

The first image of Lolita's youthful figure is impossible to forget - she wears a two-piece skimpy, flower-patterned bikini, and she sports heart-shaped [sic] sunglasses and a broad-brimmed, feathered straw hat while sunning herself on a blanket laid on the lawn. (Dirks)



11 Mason transfixed by the sight of Lolita



12 Lyon sitting on the grass

Apart from the fear of censorship, one of the reasons for the lack of sex and sensual mystery once the story proper begins is the change in medium. With print the imagination creates the image; with film it is there on the screen, frozen and thus restricted to the body, voice, and movements of the actor or actress playing the role. In addition, the time when the film was made and the rules of 'decency' that were valid then played a larger role than the director may have liked. Using so much money to produce a film made it necessary to see to it that it paid off. All these considerations were determining factors then, but they are probably the reason why many people nowadays feel that *Lolita* is dated, boring, and one of Kubrick's weaker films. On the other hand, in the light of his oeuvre as a whole, *Lolita* was a turning point in his career, and a much underrated film (cf. Harlan).

Lolita demonstrates how its director actually uses the Hollywood concepts and even abides by them without knuckling under them: The 'bad guy,' the anti-hero Humbert, loses his love and dies in prison; the heroine, Lolita, ends up a housewife and mother, the aim of the majority of young women well into the 1960s; her meddling mother, Charlotte, is killed already in the middle of the film; and the rival, Clare, is murdered before the story even unfolds. These would all be acceptable destinies in Hollywood films. And in this sense Kubrick's film is American.

Nevertheless, can one really talk about anything being 'American'? By consensus, the term has legal, national, social, linguistic, and patriotic significance. But is not the concept 'American' a construct, a stereotype, an icon, perhaps an ideal? In the world of mass entertainment, generalizations are inevitable if large audiences are to be satisfied. What is considered 'American' is the common denominator of the whole population of the US. In the film world it produces blockbusters, computerized special effects, and spectacles. This kind of 'American' does away with individuality, quirks, and attitudes essential to American self-reliance and the freedom to be how one prefers to be, say what one likes, and appear as one wants. It does away with details, nuances, and fine lines.

The dilemma, of course, is how to entertain everyone, how to succeed in creating successful films which bring in the money spent on the making of them, and yet keep away from the undifferentiated broad strokes. It is a problem to create an American Dream that shows ways of attaining it without painting black and white, good and bad, success and failure in terms of simple morals.

Thus, another kind of 'American,' and this is the case with the three directors dealt with here, is created by using those common denominators and extending, expanding, changing the icons to give them another, more complex dimension: Marilyn Monroe, Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis, Burt Lancaster, Susan Sarandon, Peter Sellers, Shelley Winters, and James Mason all belong to the mainstream of Hollywood filmmaking, but each of them gives a different picture of their Hollywood image in these three films. They create personalities that are not stereotypes, even though they start out with them. This is possible

because their directors opened the way to differentiation, because Billy Wilder, Louis Malle, and Stanley Kubrick, each in his way and according to his personality, made films that, in one way or another, broke with the formula. All three of them were working in an environment and a culture that were not at first theirs, and all three of them were forceful personalities who wanted to leave their imprint on the medium. In *Some Like It Hot*, *Atlantic City*, and *Lolita* the beginnings of each film give a jolt to complacent audiences, taking them by surprise and inviting them to think again; the endings also do not conform with the patterns of expectation and predictability. The stories in between again and again veer out into other directions than would 'normally' be taken.

If the expected is 'American,' then none of these is 'American'; if the different, the iconoclastic, the unexpected is 'American,' then all three qualify as creating new images, new concepts of 'American.'

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The Nature of Hybrid Identity in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*

Walter W. Hölbling and Justine Tally

Over the past 30 years, literature published in the United States has opened up insights into a remarkable variety of ethnicities, cultural traditions, and (gendered) states of awareness, quite commensurate with the change in paradigm from "melting pot" to "multi-cultural society" that originated in the late 1960s. American readers have learned about the struggles of Native Americans, Asian Americans, Chicana/os, and other non-anglophone groups within the borders of the United States to maintain their language and their cultural heritage; in spite of back-lash phenomena like "English-only" movements in some states and a more recent xenophobia triggered by 9/11, the general acceptance of cultural plurality has increased considerably. So has post-colonial awareness, i. e. a sensibility for the specific relationships between members of dominant and sub-dominant cultures, domestically as well as internationally (even though this change is not always illustrated by the official policy of U. S. leadership). Authors whose works demonstrate a new level of self-reflection include, e. g., Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and recently Barbara Kingsolver.

Barbara Kingsolver was born in Kentucky in 1955, studied biology at DePaw University in Indiana, spent some time working and studying in Europe, and for a while became a freelance journalist and social activist upon her return to the states. Her first book of fiction, *The Bean Trees* (1988), is about a woman who leaves rural Kentucky for urban Tucson, AZ. This was followed by the oral history of a mine strike, *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983* (ILR/Cornell University Press, 1989, 1996); a story collection, *Homeland and Other Stories* (1989); the novels *Animal Dreams* (1990), and *Pigs in Heaven* (1993); collected poems in *Another America: Otra America* (Seal Press 1992 & 1998); and the best-selling *High Tide in Tucson: Essays from Now and Never* (1995). *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998) earned accolades at home and abroad, in-

cluding the National Book Prize of South Africa. It was a finalist for the Pulitzer and PEN/Faulkner awards, and was an Oprah's Book Club selection. In 2000, Kingsolver was awarded the National Humanities Medal, America's highest honor for service through the arts. She has since published *Prodigal Summer* (2001), a novel about living and loving in Southern Appalachia; a collection of essays, *Small Wonder* (2002); as well as essays and commentaries on political, social and ecological issues.

A short plot summary of *The Poisonwood Bible*: Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist from Bethlehem, Georgia, takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959, where they live and suffer through not only a - for them - totally alien African life and culture in the small village of Kilanga along the Kwilu river, but also through the political upheavals of the times when the Congo gains its independence in 1960, and soon thereafter becomes the plaything of tribal as well as international struggles for its riches in diamonds and other natural resources. Joseph Désiré Mobutu, with the help of a military coup supported by the USA, murders the democratically elected Patrice Lumumba and governs the newly proclaimed Zaire as dictator until his overthrow by Laurent Désiré Kabila in 1997. The story is told in retrospect through the voices of Nathan's wife Orleanna and his four daughters Rachel, the twins Leah and Adah, and Ruth May; the relative narrative present is the mid-1990s. The life of the Price family's members practically begins to unravel with their arrival in Kilanga, and after Ruth May's death Orleanna and her three daughters literally walk out on Nathan, who stays behind to complete his self-proclaimed "mission" and dies a violent death. Orleanna and Adah return to the U.S., Leah marries Anatole, a supporter of Lumumba, and stays; Rachel escapes to South Africa with the help of a local adventurer-pilot with ambiguous ties to the CIA, and through various liaisons and marriages builds her life as a successful business woman and owner of the *Equatorial*, a resort hotel for Western business people.

The Poisonwood Bible (in the following abbreviated *TPB*) is a highly complex novel that can be read on many levels, but most critics agree that it is foremost a feminist/womanist (Alice Walker) novel. It

is a text that convincingly illustrates that "the personal is the political", and that the hegemonic and patriarchal "word of the father", in a very comprehensive way, affects individuals, continents, and the (ab)use of natural resources alike. In this sense, it is also postcolonial. One might also call the book a postmodern historical novel, in the tradition of Doctorow's *Ragtime* or Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. To some extent, these texts all fit the late Hungarian Marxist critic Georg Lukács' definition of the historical novel - "to make visible, in the fate of individuals, the typical characteristics of a historical period." (Lukács, 27) - yet they differ from Lukács in one significant aspect: They do no longer offer a definite (dialectical or otherwise) explanation for the course of historical events but rather acknowledge the contingencies of history. Vonnegut states in his novel that "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre", and *TPB* ends with a call for forgiveness and letting go, and the exhortation to "walk forward into the light".

Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" being the result of the productivity of colonizing activity is useful for discussing Kingsolver's book, as the novel creates hybrid spaces on many levels. Bhabha's "hybridity" shows strong affinities to the common structure of literary metaphors - the interaction/juxtaposition of two different semantic fields/images resulting in the creation of a third, new one that belongs to neither -, and this process is dominant on practically all levels of *The Poisonwood Bible*. On the macro-level, Nathan's tyrannical rule over his wife and daughters corresponds to the colonial rule of the Belgians over the Congo, his exploitation of his family to that of the European use of African natural resources, and his attempts to teach the word of the Bible to the natives of Kingala parallel the colonizers' efforts to spread European civilization. In the end, none of these endeavors are successful but rather create spaces of hybridity that develop their own cultures: The female majority of Nathan's household eventually escapes his rule, yet each of the women develop their own individual lives and only come together occasionally; this leaves Nathan unattended and in a progressively demented state of life and mind; in the church (the building itself a wonderfully hybrid construction) Jesus loses out 11:56 against the native religion in a democ-

ratic vote organized by the wise native village chief. On the political scene, the Congo becomes independent, yet is soon torn by tribal differences and civil war; the Belgians lose their dominant positions in the exploitation of natural resources to the U.S.A., who in turn end up supporting Mobutu's dictatorship over decades; and the blessings of European civilization, outside the few enclaves of the rich and mighty, make their appearance in the country mostly as free-floating signifiers put to use in what Lévi-Strauss would call *bricolage* - e. g., hubcaps serving as plates, frames without glasses as status symbols, sandals made out of car tires, all of them filled with their own significance and signification.

On the individual level as well, the interaction between colonizer and colonized creates hybrid identities in manifold ways. One of the major premises of the novel seems to be the problematizing of Western discourse through what Bhabha calls "negative transparency". It challenges our notions of "African American" (here we have white Americans in "darkest Africa"), "Post-Colonial" (the story is told by missionaries who are themselves "othered" by the colonized), or even "Magical Realism" (what do we make of the "Eyes in the Trees" in Book Seven?). Almost a hundred years after its famous predecessor, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1901), Kingsolver's novel tells a tale that undermines the 19th century colonialist perspective of a savage Africa capable of destroying even the most civilized of European men, and usurps the dominant white patriarchal discourse of Christian religious fundamentalism in a fugue of five female voices. Each of the these female narrators develops her distinct attitude towards Africa, and her individual hybrid identity.

Orleanna, the mother, becomes haunted by Africa and by her guilt for not having taken proper care of her children. She is the only one in whose thoughts we find a literal reference to "heart of darkness," yet it refers not to any dark heart of Africa but rather to her own heart cast into darkness by her oppressive husband, thus giving new feminist meaning to the traditional colonialist term. After her return to the U. S., she becomes a social activist and an almost manic cultivator of her flower garden that looks like a veritable jungle (a hybrid space reminding the reader of Nathan's spectacular failure of planting

American vegetables in the Congo soil); in her later years she retires to an island off the Georgian coast and always walks barefoot, talking to the earth, with daily reveries on the shore looking eastward, towards Africa.

Nathan, Orleanna's husband, is driven by an evangelical sense of mission that is additionally powered by fundamental guilt feelings he developed as the sole incidental survivor of his company during World War II; he is forever trying to prove to God and the rest of the world that he can be a single-handed hero. All this, in effect, makes him insecure and self-righteous, tyrannical, and finally drives him insane. Yet even he, against his will, develops his hybrid identity in interaction with the African environment. He attempts to instrumentalize local customs and events for his missionary goals, yet his ignorance of local culture, customs and especially language turn him into a pathetic personification of the stereotypical colonizer. The most striking example are his Sunday sermons which he always concludes with the rallying cry that "Tata Jesus is *bängala*" - unaware until his death that his faulty pronunciation of "*bängala*" to the natives means "poison/wood" rather than "great".

Rachel, Orleanna's oldest daughter, a 16-year old teenager when coming to the Congo, remains most like the traditional racist colonizer; she exploits Africa (as well as her good looks in her relationships with white men), yet even she has to acknowledge that one cannot ignore it. Rachel is not only endowed with a very down-to-earth (if rather self-centered) practical attitude; she also serves a comic-relief function by way of a good number of highly connotative malapropisms. One of her funniest, in the context of African polygamy, is that "we Christians have our own system of marriage, and it is called Monotony" (*TPB*, 460). Another time she is ruminating on the terrace of her safe *Equatorial* resort: "The way I see Africa, you don't have to like it but you sure have to admit it's out there. You have your way of thinking and it has its, and never the train ye shall meet" (*TPB*, 585). This follows shortly after a passage where she reconsiders her life and acknowledges, quite matter-of-factly, that she missed the train back to the U. S. quite a while ago because her experience in Africa had changed her beyond return: "My high school friends would still have

been whining over boyfriends and fighting for carhop jobs.[...] Their idea of a dog-eat-dog world was Beauty School. And now here comes Rachel with stained hair and one dead sister and a whole darn marriage behind her already, not to mention hell and high water. [...] Let's face it, I could never have been popular again at home" (*TPB*, 582f.).

Leah, one of the twins, embraces Africa; it takes her a while to free herself from her father's dominance, but then she takes her stance not only against him but against the whole patriarchal order by becoming an excellent hunter with the bow and arrow, upsetting Nathan as well as the 'natural order' of the village males by killing an antelope with one shot. Doubly marginalized as white and as a woman, she fights to create her own hybrid space, marries Anatole, the liberal representative of a new Africa, and has four sons with him, in spite of repeated politically motivated imprisonments of her husband. We see her last working in a cooperative in Angola, just across the border from Mobutu's Zaire.

Ruth May, Orelanna's youngest daughter, is absorbed by Africa; she is five years old when the family comes to the Congo, and her appropriately short sections in the novel present us with the dreamlike world of a child's understanding of events. Yet, she is also the one who first establishes contact to the children of the village by playing games ("Mother, may I?") and seems to have a pre-adult/pre-rational, intuitive access to Africa, not unlike the pre-natal wisdom Romantics like Wordsworth ("The child *is* the philosopher") attribute to children. Her sudden death not only haunts her mother's memory until the end of the book but also creates a hybrid existence for her as "The Eyes in the Trees." They become a metaphor for the feeling not only of children walking through a dense forest but, on a much more generic level, problematizing a situation we find again and again in texts that present European missionaries, colonizers, or soldiers moving in unknown territory, from Ch. B. Brown's *Wieland* to J. F. Cooper's *The Deerslayer*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, or the novels and movies about the Vietnam War, especially Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*: The feeling of being watched by something unknown and unseen.

However, it is Adah's, the second twin's, ambivalence towards Africa that most invitingly opens up the text for an intriguing exploration of Bhabha's theories of hybridity and the "in-between",

The very title of the novel calls to the primacy of textuality and the framing of the narrative by both language and religious myth, and its "deconstruction" precisely at the moment the colonizers pretend to impose both on the colonized. Indeed, Bhabha designates just such a moment as the entrance of civilization into modernity:

For at the same time as the question of cultural difference emerged in the colonial text, discourses of civility were defining the doubling moment of the emergence of Western modernity. Thus the political and theoretical genealogy of modernity lies not only in the origins of the idea of civility, but in this history of the colonial moment. It is to be found in the resistance of the colonized populations to the Word of God and Man - Christianity and the English language. (Bhabha, 32-33)

Quotations from the Bible head six sections which are denominated Genesis, The Revelation, The Judges, Bel and the Serpent, Exodus, and Song of the Three Children. The Word of God as an instrument of Western hegemony is challenged in the novel in two different ways: first, by an African Myth of Origin and, secondly, by Adah's ironic observations on the duplicitous nature of the "native" language when mouthed by her missionary father, Nathan. Although these challenges in the African context are based on orality, the novel sets them up as text-based. The Biblical Word of God becomes "poison" when its textuality is interpreted within a vastly different context, by a people whose narrative and referents are at odds with a literal translation of its terms. Hence Nathan's insistence on taking the young children to the river for baptism is alarming to the villagers, who have witnessed the alligators devouring their off-spring. Complicating, perhaps intensifying, the problem is the preacher's pronunciation of the Kilanga word *batiza*:

Batiza pronounced with the tongue curled just so means 'baptism.' Otherwise it means 'to terrify.' Nelson spent part of an afternoon dem-

onstrating to me that fine linguistic difference while we scraped chicken manure from the nest boxes. No one has yet explained it to the Reverend. He is not of a mind to receive certain news. Perhaps he should clean more chicken houses. (TPB; 243)

Here the word of divine authority is deeply flawed by the assertion of the indigenous sign, and in the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid - neither one thing nor the other. (Bhabha, 33)

Franz Fanon has noted that "a man who has a language ... possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. ... Mastery of language affords remarkable power" (18). Perhaps then not so curiously, does the African myth of origin call as clearly to the concept of language as does the opening of Genesis: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Nelson explains to Adah that it is "nommo" (or naming) that brings existence into being, and interestingly "nommo" also comes from the water.

Nommo is the force that makes things live as what they are: man or tree or animal. Nommo means word. (TPB, 238)

Nommo comes from the mouth, like water vapor, he said: a song, a poem, a scream, a prayer, a name, all these are nommo. Water itself is nommo, of the most important kind, it turns out. Water is the word of the ancestors given to us or withheld, depending on how well we treat them. The word of the ancestors is pulled into trees and men, Nelson explained, and this allows them to stand and live as muntu. (TPB, 239)

The Word/word, then, becomes the principle site of contention and resistance. According to Bhabha, "[t]he transmutations and translations of indigenous traditions in their opposition to colonial authority demonstrate how the desire of the signifier, the indeterminacy of intertextuality, can be deeply engaged in the postcolonial struggle against dominant relations of power and knowledge" (32-33). The "interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a

cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (4).

Of the multiple voices in the novel, it seems that Adah is metaphorically and literally the character most involved in the examination of the power of the word/Word, and the subversive nature of the hybrid space. Not only is she the last voice/character to be introduced, but hers is the final say before the "coda" entitled "The Eyes in the Trees." It is Adah, who signals the hegemony of both Western religion and the logos by referring to Nathan as "Our Father." Kimberly A. Koza points out that Kingsolver "also links Adah's physical disability with the Africans' racial and cultural difference. [...] This linkage is useful in suggesting that the Congolese, like Adah, possess a valuable different point of view" (287). However, Koza insists that "Kingsolver's novel is essentially about America, not Africa" (287) and that "her novel remains preoccupied with America's burden of guilt; thus Africa seems to function as a backdrop for working out essentially American concerns" (293). We seek to argue in this paper that the text is concerned to a much greater extent with the "hybrid space" created by colonialism. For Bhabha, "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha, 107), and the importance given to Adah as character and her uncanny abilities with language would seem to emphasize this. Adah actually states that she and Anatole are "kindred spirits":

"We are both marked, I suppose. Freaks at first sight, who have learned to take the world at face value. He was marked early on by his orphaned state, his displacement, his zealous skeptical mind, his aloneness. I have noticed that he, too, reads things backward: what the billboards are really selling, for example. Also where poverty comes from, and where it goes" (*TPB*, 498-9).

However, it can be argued that more than merely representing a different point of view, it is through Adah that we come to understand the duplicity of the novel's title and delve into the nature of the hybrid space.

To understand this space, it may be useful to summarize and oversimplify Homi Bhabha's conception of hybridity in order to read Adah as a metaphor for the "in-between" consciousness:

First, the imposition of an authoritative text (e.g., the Bible) on a foreign language/culture will produce misreadings/different interpretations according to the native language and historical and cultural context. "[T]he institution of the Word in the wilds is also an *Entstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition – the dazzling light of literature sheds only areas of darkness" (Bhabha, 105).

Second, the appropriation of these "misreadings" produces what he calls a "negative transparency"; i.e., the source of light casts the text in a different light (becoming a "re-source"), varying the original meaning into what he calls the "hybrid space" – belonging neither to the original nor to the native culture.

Despite appearances, the text of transparency inscribes a double vision: the field of the "true" emerges as a visible effect of knowledge/power only after the regulatory and displacing division of the true and the false. From this point of view, discursive "transparency" is best read in the photographic sense in which a transparency is also always a negative, processed into visibility through the technologies of reversal, enlargement, lighting, editing, projection, not a source but a re-source of light.¹ (Bhabha, 110)

And, third, it is this "hybrid space" which Bhabha calls "the location of culture."² Hybridity, then, is instrumental in the production of new meaning; but even more, in the colonial context, it is the sign of disruption into authoritative discourse, a subversive doubling of language, hence the re-creation of meaning.

Hybridity represents that ambivalent "turn" of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification – a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority. (Bhabha, 113)

As a young white woman in the Congo, Adah is, as are her parents and sisters, othered by the Africans, but as disabled twin to Leah,

she is also her sister's darker mirror. "Othered" by her disability in the United States, she is considered "normal" in Africa where physical disability is only one more fact of human existence. Yet Adah is also aware that as a twin in Africa, she would never have been allowed to survive,³ creating in her an ambivalence that also metaphorically represents the hybrid space, as Adah can achieve integrity neither in Western nor in African conceptions of her "self." Daughter of a fundamentalist Baptist preacher, she early on questions a God who would condemn his children arbitrarily to "darkness" and "hell" (in Africa), just as she has been randomly selected to be the "lesser" of the twins. Punished for her audacity in questioning God's will, Adah chooses silence over speech, yet confounds her teachers with her exceptional mind. As she points out, "Silence has many advantages. When you do not speak, other people presume you to be deaf or feeble-minded and promptly make a show of their own limitations" (*TPB*, 40).

Adah's "other-ness" in the family and in the white world she comes from and, indeed, her chosen silence, situate her as metaphor for the African "other" or "subaltern," which Bhabha defines in its Derridean sense as "[not simply an oppressed group] but lacking autonomy, subjected to the influence or hegemony of another social group, not possessing one's own hegemonic position" (Bhabha, 59). But it is precisely her "silence" and her self-defined "slant" which give her an uncanny access to the "in-between": Adah can read texts indiscriminately forwards and backwards, finding meaning in unexpected places. Her sister Leah is her "twin", while she calls herself the "nwit" (calling to "nitwit," what she feels that her father and other "normal" Americans think of her)

My twin sister, Leah, and I are identical in theory, just as in theory we are all made in God's image. Leah and Adah began our life as images mirror perfect. We have the same eyes dark and chestnut hair. But I am a lame gallimaufry and she remains perfect. [...]

She grew strong as I grew weak. (Yes! Jesus loves me!) And so it came to pass, in the Eden of our mother's womb, I was cannibalized by my sister. (*TPB*, 39)

The fact of Adah's "twin-ness" in the novel is crucial to our understanding of her as the colonized "other." According to Bhabha:

Doubling repeats the fixed and empty presence of authority by articulating it syntagmatically with a rage of differential knowledges and the positionalities that both estrange its "identity" and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power. (Bhabha, 119-120)

Leah's self-conception as "Star Pupil" Adah reverses to "Lipup Rats," and calls her "Miss Rat-pup." Words and their inverse are her special revenge on an unjust world, and "living in the Congo shakes open the prison house of my disposition and lets all the wicked hoodoo Adahs run forth"; she feels special affinity for "Dr. Jeckyll's dark desires and for Mr. Hyde's crooked body" (*TPB*, 64).

In addition to her penchant for coaxing meaning out of rhyming words, Adah's special talent is the "palindrome," words and phrases that can be read equally in either direction: "Sun o put o not upon us!" or "Draw a level award!"

The normal, I understand, can see words my way only if they are adequately poetic: Poor Dan is in a droop. (*TPB*, 67)

Hence, she prefers to think of herself as "Ada," a "perfect palindrome. Damn mad!" Her flight from Bethlehem (*TPB*, 461) is an escape from not only a culture which belittles her for her disability, but also a flight from a God who would arbitrarily condemn his children to damnation by virtue of their having been born in Africa. "[A]dmission to heaven is gained by the luck of the draw" (*TPB*; 196). Consequently, she ceases to believe in the God of Our Father, and spends a good part of her childhood experimenting with palindromes through which she assumes a subversive type of textual authority by subverting the Word.

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of dis-

criminatorial identities that secure the "pure" and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power.⁴ (Bhabha, 112)

Tellingly, Adah writes across the cover of her notebook –

ELAPSED OR ESTEEMED; ALL ADE MEETS ERODES PALE!

– which, with a little interpretive leeway, can be read to mean "no matter whether Adah is ridiculed or appreciated, everything she encounters undermines the concept of 'whiteness'."

In Kikongo, the language spoken in Kilanga, Adah finds "a language even more cynical than my own":

In Kilanga the word *nzolo* is used in three different ways, at least. It means 'most dearly beloved.' Or it is a thick yellow grub highly prized for fish bait. Or it is a type of tiny potato that turns up in the market now and then, always sold in bunches that clump along the roots like knots on a string. And so we sing at the top of our lungs in church: 'Tata Nzolo!' To whom are we calling? (TPB, 197)

Ada deconstructs the language by coming at words from a different "slant" and finds both poetry and meaning in unlikely places. Her concern with textuality, moreover, is evident in her constant referencing of other texts: apart from insistent incursions of biblical citations, we find allusions to the Revolutionary Fathers, Greek Philosophers (312), Nathaniel Hawthorne (314), Shakespeare (557 & 502), and Edgar Allan Poe (64 & 212), as well as everyday sayings, nursery rhymes, and fables. She elsewhere describes herself as a "victim of poetry" and aspires early on to be a "poet doctor" like William Carlos Williams (whose name she feels a certain affinity with as it can be read almost equally from left to right and vice versa). In fact, Adah's

second intervention in the book of "The Revelation" repeatedly invests one of his most famous poems with varied meanings.

So much depends on a red wheelbarrow glazed with rain water standing beside the white chickens.⁵ That is one whole poem written by a doctor named William C. Williams. Chickens white beside standing water rain, with glazed wheelbarrow. Red on! Depends much. So? (*TPB*, 195)

So much depends on the white chicken bones in the calabash bowl left standing in a puddle of rain outside our door. (*TPB*, 199)

So much depends on the tone of voice. (*TPB*, 200)

And later:

So much depends on the single red feather I saw when I stepped out of the latrine. (*TPB*, 211)

These new "productions of meaning," while an interesting literary strategy for developing the narrative line with certain intrigue, are rather less interesting than her initial inversion of the poem; not quite the mirror image of the palindrome, but an evocative play on the post-colonial Africa:

Chickens white beside standing water rain, with glazed wheelbarrow.
Red on! Depends much. So?

Again with a bit of literary licence and calling on fields of association: "Chickens," of course, as another word for "cowards," who happen to be "white" (ghostly, phantasmagorical, drained of vitality, startled and grossly out of place in a world so rich in sensuality and color), beside "standing water" (associated with stagnant and fetid, as opposed to running water, a vibrant life symbol), "rain" (a homophone for "reign") "with glazed wheelbarrow" (a tool instrumental in the cultivating of the earth, now rendered useless in "glass," divorced from its place in primary production; or "glazed" as "shiny" with its reference to digging up diamonds instead of produce). "Red on!" is a reference to the rise of Patrice Lumumba, whose Marxist-communist leanings so

worried the West. "Depends much," no less than the future of the Congo, but "So?" Adah's cynical detachment and quizzical mind ever questions the world and its (dis)ordering.

Even as she overtly seeks to deconstruct the myths propagated by Western colonialists, it is Adah's sensitivity to language that allows her to find the relevance of the heteroglossia found in both English and African words.

All the eyes of America know what a Congolese looks like. Skin and bones dancing, lips upcurled like oyster shells, a no-count man with a femur in his hair.

The nganga Kuvudundu dressed in white with no bone in his hair is standing at the edge of our yard. He of eleven toes. He repeats the end of his own name over and over: the word dundu. Dundu is a kind of antelope. Or it is a small plant of the genus *Veronia*. Or a hill. Or a price you have to pay. So much depends on the tone of voice. One of these things is what our family has coming to us. Our Baptist ears from Georgia will never understand the difference. (*TPB*, 200)

The "no-count" man of the myth materializes in their lives as the man "of eleven toes." It is only later that Adah will fully understand the enormity of all these different meanings for her family; the antelope, the hill and the burning plants all converge in the climatic hunting scene of the novel, and lead to the crisis in which the "price you have to pay" plays on the family name.

The poet Adah most often quotes, however, and whose silent observations she reveres, is Emily Dickinson, whose name in a palindrome ('No snikcidylime') is "a contrary name with a delicious sour-green taste," and whom she presses into service with yet more metaphors. Nathan, tiring of the repetition of texts by Methuselah (left behind by the former missionary to Kilanga, Brother Fowles), throws the parrot out of his cage, thereby imposing freedom on the reluctant bird. One red plume (EMULP DER ENO), which brings to Adah's mind Dickinson's "Hope is the thing with feathers," comes to symbolize the Congo's short-lived experiment with democracy before Patrice Lumumba is murdered:

Set upon by the civet cat, the spy, the eye, the hunger of a superior need, Methuselah is free of his captivity at last. This is what he leaves to the world: gray and scarlet feathers strewn over the damp grass. Only this and nothing more, the tell-tale heart, tale of the carnivore. One of what he was taught in the house of the master. Only feathers, without the ball of Hope inside. Feathers at last at last and no words at all. (*TPB*, 212)

Adah's peculiar capacity also allows her to read through "the smiling bald man with the grandfather face" to "another face" that speaks "through snakes" on Axelroot's radio. She writes a "captive poem"—"Redrum sekil oh weki ekil ew"⁶—and brings on a political and religious equation in a personal epiphany:

By morning it had lost the power to shock. Really, in daylight, where is the surprise of this? How is it different from Grandfather God sending the African children to hell for being born too far from a Baptist Church? I should like to stand up in Sunday school now and ask: May Africa talk back? Might those pagan babies send us to hell for living too far from a jungle? Because we have not tasted the sacrament of palm nuts? Or. Might the tall, thin man rise up and declare: We don't like Ike. So sorry, but Ike should perhaps be killed now with a poisoned arrow. Oh, the magazines would have something to say about that all right. What sort of man would wish to murder the president of another land? None but a barbarian. A man with a bone in his hair. (*TPB*, 338)

As Bhabha indicates, "hybridity initiates the project of political thinking by continually facing it with the strategic and the contingent, with the countervailing thought of its own 'unthought'" (112). Adah's repetition of the palindrome at various times in the story—"Live was I ere I saw evil"—, introduced first as a reflection on what she felt was a personal betrayal, becomes complicated as the political tragedy of the Congo is mirrored in the personal tragedy of the transplanted white family trying to survive there. Neither the Americans nor the Congolese have a monopoly on evil.

But more important than that political revelation is Adah's particular grasp of "Truth": "Tell all the truth but tell it slant" (*TPB*, 461)

becomes Dickinson's admonition to this "crooked little person, obsessed with balance," and, indeed, her representation as hybrid space comes closest to any kind of truth we are likely to find in the novel. After her (tortuous) return to the United States where she weasels her way into Emory University and then into medical school, Adah meets another med student who declares that her disability, having occurred at such an early age, should have corrected itself. After experimenting for six months with "regression," in which she must not stand or walk, only crawl like a young child, Adah now qualifies as "whole", yet has the feeling that her admission into "normality" has come at too steep a price – her "doubled" self who could read a "slanted" truth. In Africa the Kilanga people had referred to her as benduka, "the crooked walker," but within the name was carried the reference to bënduka, "the sleek bird that dipped in and out of the banks with a crazy ungrace that took your breath" (*TPB*, 559). Adah opens her section in *Exodus* with a lament: "I am losing my slant," for she no longer has "Ada, the mystery of coming and going" (558), so how can she "invent my version of the story, without my crooked vision?" (559) Now, when she opens a book, the "words sort themselves into narrow-minded single file on the page." Sometimes at night and in secret she tries to recover some of her old self by limping around like Mr. Hyde, like Jekyll, craving "that particular darkness curled up within me" (558). "How can I explain that my two unmatched halves used to add up to more than one whole?" (559) For as Bhabha says, "the existence of two contradictory knowledges (multiple beliefs) splits the ego (or the discourse) into two psychical attitudes, and forms of knowledge, toward the external world" (115).

And herein seems to lie the meaning of the hybrid space, at least for Barbara Kingsolver: the capacity for not only reading and deconstructing the dominant colonial discourse, not even only the understanding of a foreign, colonized culture, but the sum of two halves that is more than the whole, the fusing of culture and cosmology into some new possibility –

Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other "de-

nied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition.(Bhabha, 114)

– away from the "narrow-minded" text and into the riotous creativity that comes into being with the discourse in free-fall. The way forward toward a new (American) identity may well be found in the striving for cultural hybridity. Indeed, in the multiculturalist milieu that has become not only the United States, but the world at large, can we afford not to? Or in Homi Bhabha's words, "[...] how can the human world live its difference; how can a human being live Other-wise?" (64).

Walter W. Hölbling
Karl-Franzens-University Graz

Justine Tally
University of La Laguna

Notes

¹ The incident in the novel in which lessons of the Bible and the lessons of democracy are fused in the native Africans deciding to vote on whether to receive Christ as their personal savior or not is not only related with much drollness (and subsequent hilarity), but also subversively re-writes the texts of the colonizers.

² An easy example is found in Chinua Achebe's essay "A Image of Africa", in which he discredits Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darnkess* as an irredeemably racist text, pointing out that the location of the same area in the Congo that Marlowe speaks of was also home to the Fang people, renowned as being "among the world's greatest masters of the sculptured form." Achebe points out that it is the profound confrontation of Picasso and Matisse with one of the Fang's great masks that produces dramatic change in the rather moribund art world of the West with the nascence of cubism (787).

³ One critic accuses Kingsolver of having mistakenly ascribed the custom of killing twins at birth to the region of Kilanga while, in fact, it belongs to another area of Africa. Certainly the author's attention to historical detail in *The Poisonwood Bible* lends credence to labeling the novel as "historical realism," but for the coherence of the *literary* depiction of Adah, this "mistake" is necessary to underline her ambivalence. See below.

⁴ "The desire for the Other is doubled by the desire in language, which splits the difference between Self and Other so that both positions are partial; neither is sufficient unto itself.[...] The very question of identification only

emerges *in-between* disavowal and designation. It is performed in the agonistic struggle between the epistemological, visual demand for a knowledge of the Other, and its representation in the act of articulation and enunciation" (Bhabha, 50).

⁵ Adah's addition of the word "standing" to Williams' famous poem may simply be poetic license so as to play with meaning in her subsequent modifications of the phrase.

⁶ "We like Ike who likes murder."

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East Comes West: America's New Immigrants – New Lives, New Texts

Brigitte Scheer-Schäzler

"... in this era of massive diasporic movements, honorable survival requires resilience, curiosity, and compassion..." (Bharati Mukherjee, "Beyond Multiculturalism", 30)

"Where did you learn how to be a critic?" an editor of a magazine for which I've written an article has asked me, while treating me to lunch in a chic midtown Manhattan restaurant. "At Harvard, I guess," I answered. "No," he said, "there's something else." "I suppose it's that I'm an immigrant," I said. "Ah yes," he said, "that must be it." (Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*, 226f.)

I

Little justification is needed to stress the relevance of migration for the contemporary world. Influential critics of society, historians and writers have all commented on this point. Will Kymlicka in his *Multicultural Citizenship* summarizes the position by stating that "the late twentieth century has been described as the age of mass migration" (Kymlicka, 193). Regarding our focal point, North America, the US and Canada have been traditional countries of immigration and, depending on how long a view one takes, the history of America is a history of the people who went there, beginning with the migrations across the Bering land bridge, now Bering Strait, that might have occurred anytime between 75.000 and 11.000 years ago (cf. Lewin, 1230). Even Native American myths mention that – so appropriate in this context – "they went toward the west" (Anon., "Zuni Talk Concerning the First Beginning", 27). Among the earliest known texts are emergence songs celebrating arrival:

"... we arrive singing,
 Headdresses waving in the breeze.
 We have come! We have come!
 The land trembles with our dancing and singing."
 (Anon., "Pima Emergence Song", 26.)

Not only is migration "a fundamental human activity" (Daniels, 1990, 3), but the immigrant can be seen as a kind of prototype of many modern identities: the adventurer, the explorer, the wanderer/traveller, the displaced person, the refugee, the asylum seeker, the invisible man, the illegal, the exile, the expatriate, the alien – resident or otherwise, the mysterious stranger, the outsider, the "other", the modern nomad, the person lost in America, lost in translation or dislocation.

Maybe the concept of a contemporary post-colonial, post-postmodern form of nomadism best captures the thousand faces of this figure. The French critic Gilles Deleuze (1977), the critic of culture Rosi Braidotti (1994), the philosopher Vilem Flusser (1990) and the late British travel writer Bruce Chatwin (1987), to name only a few, have all dealt with the looming reappearance of the nomad – more often than not exploring it as metaphor – and have stressed, each in his or her own way, nomadic thought as one of the foremost factors of change in contemporary society. Its essence is a movement away from the center towards the periphery because people are "impelled by the attraction of movement, by what lies outside" (Deleuze, 148), the reason for this attraction being their resistance to becoming, in Deleuze's term, "overcodified", which is to say, dominated by factors not of their own choosing. Braidotti's nomadic subjects have "relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity" (Braidotti, 22); they are characterized by "a rigorous, relentless sort of toughness" (Braidotti, 28). "Nomadic thinking is a minority position", Braidotti also states (Braidotti, 29). It develops a sense of identity "that rests not on fixity but on contingency" (Braidotti, 31) and expresses itself in seeking bonding, coalitions and interconnections (cf. Braidotti, 35). It fosters a particular fascination with places of transit: "...areas of transit and passage become contemporary equivalents of the desert ... because they are ... indicating a multitude of possible directions" (Braidotti, 20).

In order to sketch the spectrum of reactions to areas of transit and implicitly to the process of transition, it is interesting to compare Braidotti's attitude – she went from Italy to France to Australia to the US and eventually to the Netherlands – to that of another recent immigrant whose life circles the globe in the opposite direction: the above-quoted Bharati Mukherjee who was born in Calcutta, went to Europe and on to Canada and now lives in the US. I do not want to overstress this point in comparing a person of European descent to one of Asian origin but even such serendipitous parallels cannot be wholly without significance for the topic, with the Asian writer standing, as I will outline later on, for the New new immigrants.

I have a special affection for the places of transit that go with traveling: stations and airport lounges, trams, shuttle buses, and check-in areas. In between zones where all ties are suspended and time stretched to a sort of continuous present. Oases of nonbelonging, spaces of detachment ... public places are sites that mark rites of passage and are subjected to culture-specific imperatives such as schedules, rhythms of production, allowed or forbidden directions, loading and unloading, areas of transition, and spaces of transactions. ... Airport lounges are places where one passes 'without registering passage'; as such they are a microcosmos of contemporary society. (Braidotti, 19)

There are national airlines flying the world that do not appear in any directory. There are charters who've lost their way and now just fly, improvising crews and destinations. They serve no food, no beverages. Their crews often look abused. There is a shadow world of aircraft permanently aloft that share air lanes and radio frequencies with Pan Am and British Air and Air-India, portaging people who coexist with tourists and businessmen. But we are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers; you see us sleeping in airport lounges; you watch us unwrapping the last of our native foods, unrolling our prayer rugs, reading our holy books, taking out for the hundredth time an aerogram promising a job or space to sleep, a newspaper in our language, a photo of happier times, a passport, a visa, a laissez passer.

We are the outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmacs, ferried in old army trucks where we are roughly handled and taken to roped-off corners

and waiting rooms where surly, barely wakened customs guards await their bribe. We are dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season, the wilted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land, to pass through, to continue.... What country? What continent? We pass through wars, through plagues. I am hungry for news, but the discarded papers are in characters or languages I cannot read. The zigzag route is straightest. I phantom my way through three continents. (Mukherjee, 1989, 100f.)

Both voices are very clearly embodiments of the nomad experience but where there is the attraction, the lust for adventure and the secure person's privileged and distanced observer's perspective and intellectual playfulness in Braidotti, there is mainly anxiety, confusion and fear in Mukherjee's persona. Braidotti "reads" the signs of her no-place fluently, the other person encounters writing in the form of characters that have no meaning for her. She has yet to master the immigrant's basic skills of making sense, of reading and speaking so as to be understood, and also of speaking up.

These two comments indicate not only on the obvious level how differently transition can be experienced but on the implicit one that the access to speech is the power factor that changes the experience and assessment of the whole situation.

"Suffering is/living in America/and not being able/to write a damn thing about it", says Indian American Sujata Bhatt in her poem "Go to Ahmedabad" (Bhatt, 26f.).

The literary nomads all stress the therapeutic, recuperative powers of writing. "A writer must have only one identity: his books, I thought, and only one homeland: Literature" (Ugresic, 138), is a statement representative of many similar ones. The characters created in these writings frequently exhibit the behavior and psychological makeup of modern nomads: "Many of my characters," Mukherjee says, "have some call from the unconscious that forces them to undertake these journeys outside their circumscribed little, petty villages, and it gets them off and in trouble. But there's a morality and a purification involved in that" (Moyers, Mukherjee, 4). The journey for them becomes part of a ritual of purification or catharsis leading to self-renewal or the self-reinvention posited by many new immigrant writ-

ers. It is sometimes perceived as an analogy to the nomadic search for new, more fertile pastures that is based on the recognition of life-enhancing circumstances rather than on rootedness and traditional local allegiance. The aim is the escape from Deleuze's overcodification, from limitations and restrictions, from the laws of territorialization towards possibilities of self-realization which ultimately rest in freedom of choice. The places of transit once more become the places where this is most keenly felt and where the goal of the journey is perceived no longer as a fantasy but as one that can indeed be reached: "The route I take between leaving one plane and boarding the next, from gate to gate, from flight to flight, is a route to inner freedom" (Ugresic, 225).

II

Who then are today's immigrants? A demographic survey provides some amazing facts and dates.

Historians have called attention to the fact that the second half of the 20th century may well be the era of the largest voluntary and involuntary mass movements in history. Wars, revolutions, political, religious and racial persecution as well as poverty and the wish for a better life or simply the desire to start all over again are causing many millions of people to leave their homelands. In the two decades from 1970 to 1990 an estimated 6 million people worldwide emigrated per year, and their numbers are increasing. The major areas of emigration are Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, the Indian subcontinent, East Asia, the Caribbean and Mexico. Areas of immigration are Europe (especially the U.K., France and Germany) and North America (*Der Standard* 1ff.) North America is still the preferred place of immigration, as the US and Canada have been considered countries of immigration ever since they were first colonized by Europeans. Nowadays, the immigrants come mainly from Asia and Latin America. Close to one million legal immigrants annually enter the US. Between 1981 and 1989, 42 % of all legal immigrants came from Asia, another 42 % from Latin America and only 11 % came from Europe, whereas in the three decades from 1931 to 1960, only 5 % of all legal immigrants came from Asia, 58 % came from Europe and 21 % from Canada,

most of the latter of European heritage (cf. Daniels 1989, 41). To give another example of these demographic changes, in 1994 the top six nations sending immigrants to the US were Mexico, China, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam and India (cf. Payant, XX). From 1991 to 2000, legal immigrants numbered above 9 million (2001 *Statistical Yearbook*, 16) with 31 % from Asia, 43 % from Latin America and 15% from Europe (2001 *Statistical Yearbook*, 19).

These people account for dramatic social changes based on the composition of the population. The status of so-called minorities (i.e. people other than whites) has been irrevocably altered by these developments. Whereas in 1980 whites still made up four fifths of the population, in 2000 only three in every four Americans were white (*US Census*, Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin, 3).

Examples of the speed at which the racial composition of the US population is changing can be seen for example in many parts of California, where whites with a European background have already become a minority by 2000. The fastest growing group nationwide in the decade from 1980 - 1990 were the Asians whose number doubled in this period and increased by 48% in the following decade (*US Census*, The Asian Population, 3); the second fastest growing group were the Hispanics whose population increased by 53 % from 1980 - 1990; they grew by 58% from 1990 - 2000, making them the fastest growing group in this decade. However, the data of the 1990 census and those of the 2000 census are not directly comparable because the questions were changed. In the newer survey, the assignments to race are all based on self-identification; it was possible to assign oneself to more than one race. When race is used alone or in combination, i.e. with people assigning themselves to one or more races, the resulting figures show that the Asian population grew by 72.2 % and the Hispanic or Latino population by 57.9 % (*US Census*, The Asian Population, 1).

The arrival of large numbers of immigrants from different lands has resulted in a society characterized by diversity in many aspects, such as physical appearance, customs, beliefs and languages. Often it is the school system that is first confronted with this diversity: for example, in the school district of Cupertino, California, 64 languages are spoken among the 14.000 students, with 42 % of the students belong-

ing to minorities. In Sunnyvale, California, 75 languages are spoken by the residents. In quite a few districts adults belonging to ethnic minorities may rarely encounter spoken English.

Whereas the ethnic composition of the US population based on the 2000 census is 75.1 % white, 12.3 % black, 12.5 % Hispanic, 4.2 % Asian and Pacific Islander and 0.9 % Native American (*US Census, Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin*, 3, 9), the Census Bureau has predicted that by the year 2100, the United States will be a minority-majority nation, with 10 % Asian Americans, 12 % Black Americans, 27 % Hispanic Americans, and 46 % white Americans, or 49 % "minority", 46 % white and 5 % other. New York City is already no longer a majority city; by the year 2030, only 15 % of the city's population will be white, Asian Americans will form 14 % of the population, black Americans 29 %, and Hispanic Americans 41 %.

The Asian population that numbered 7.3 million in 1990 has reached 11.9 million in 2000 (*US Census, The Asian Population*, 1). What all census projections tell us is that a new American society is already here, one of greater ethnic variety, of global representation rather than of European descent. The projections indicate "an intraethnic, interethnic new world of interlayered cultures..." (Lim, 1992, 21f.).

Of course statistics underline the numerical impact only without considering its social, political and cultural ramifications. Still one pauses when one considers the growth of the Asian population since 1980 as either the fastest or the second fastest growing group, depending on one's reading of the figures. From all available data one can conclude that the Asians will be keeping up this considerable pace.

Thus the Asian influx is possibly the most visible and in many ways the most remarkable; being a visible minority, these new immigrants have literally changed the face of their country of immigration. In recognition of this fact, a special issue of *Time* (1993) had as its cover the face of a woman which was created by a computer from a mix of several races, a "morphed" portrait of a being that represents "The New Face of America". She has jokingly been called Virtual Eve or SimEve (from simulation) and she is, according to *Time's* managing editor, 15% Anglo-Saxon, 17.5 % Middle Eastern, 17.5 % African,

7.5 % Asian, 35 % Southern European and 7.5 % Hispanic; according to the editor, "as onlookers watched the image ... begin to appear on the computer screen, several staff members fell in love" (quoted in Cronon, 365).

Taking into consideration that there has never been greater cultural, racial and linguistic diversity among immigrants, historians and social critics have begun to refer to them as "new immigrants" or "emergent minorities" or, again in the words of Shirley Geok-lin Lim, herself an immigrant, as "those NEW new Americans who, despite restrictive immigration policies, continue to flock to the United States" (Lim, 1992, 19). What, then distinguishes them from earlier generations of immigrants apart from their ethnic origin and how is this reflected in their writing?

An important distinctive feature is usually referred to as their bifurcation. Many are as destitute as ever, conforming to the cliché of the immigrant, the poor, illiterate person arriving on the new shores with nothing but the shirt on his or her back, often emigrating just to survive. However, a sizeable fraction are college educated professionals with a firm command of English, coming in search of better opportunities, better education, better business, an enhanced life. They are

[...] mostly professionals, doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, they are affluent They are more independent, luckier in many ways than the immigrants that preceded them. No memories of breadlines and backbreaking work on the farm or as menials in crowded cities. They are smart. They know all the answers, or seem to, anyhow; they glow with confidence, a beautiful people No loneliness for them. Loneliness is a disease, a terminal disease, they say in so many words, and they talk a lot. They hold glittering parties around their swimming pools, the diamonds on their fingers outshining the light in their eyes.

These are not the envious words of the majority about-to-be-displaced but the assessment of a person who is himself an immigrant, an earlier immigrant looking at the newcomers, Filipino American novelist Bienvenido Santos – a lovely first name for an immigrant –, who calls these recent immigrants "a new breed" (Santos, 52). It is important to remember that they are vastly diverse in their economic,

social, educational and other stratifications yet a larger percentage of them than before is highly articulate – and they talk and they write a lot.

Thus the time lag between the experience of immigration and the written account of this experience that was characteristic of earlier immigrant writing is often greatly reduced if it exists at all, giving these texts a quality of immediacy, a red-hot feeling. Desires are more forcefully expressed – these people know what they want and they know how to say it; their difficulties are more acutely rendered since solutions to problems often become perceptible only with time and experience. The protagonists still smart with disappointments and setbacks; the criticism of their new surroundings is often harsher but there is also more energy, more hope, more of the relief and the satisfaction of having made it to the land-of-try-again or Immigrantia (cf. Furnas, 14). Accusations of the new society are often based on a sense of ethnic pride and pride in one's own traditions, history, and culture. Assimilation and acculturation are no longer unquestioningly accepted goals, and superficial adaptation of new mores is often practiced merely on a pragmatic basis. The process of assimilation is slowed by a new transnationalism facilitated by the modern means of communication and travel. These make the frequent going back-and-forth and the retention of ties easier for many who then straddle two cultures, refusing to declare their allegiance to either one but learning to feel secure as binational and bicultural. Most members of a minority do not want their group to be or even to be called a "model minority" striving for the greatest possible unobtrusiveness, a term frequently applied in the past decades to Asians in comparison to e.g. Hispanics.

Among the ones who express themselves in writing there is also a new distribution of gender: many more women than formerly are presently recording their experiences in fictional or autobiographical form or in a mixture of these and other forms. Thus there is a greater focus on women's lives and concerns, on women's psychology, and on their interpretation of the experience of immigration, with the accompanying feature of a sizeable number of women characters as heroines deserving of the name.

Which are the topics that these writers deal with? One can mention only a few central ones, several of which constitute the basic themes of the literature of immigration in general. The topics naturally tend to crystallize around those nodes of experience where change is felt most acutely, where lives undergo the deepest transformations. To list the ones that recur most frequently one has to name the following: the experience and the moment of departure; the significance of travel and transition, travel – the journey – becoming a metaphor of the immigrant's human condition; the excitement of arrival with its confusions, fears, and surprises; the endless difficulties of initial – and later – adjustment; the art of compromising and reconciling the irreconcilable; the language problem, aphasia, speechlessness, silence; the dangers and the power of articulation; the experience of discrimination and racism; coping with humiliation and defeat; rejection and acceptance; cultural divergences, veiled conflicts, violent clashes; the constant tug between the old and the new; the doubleness or tripleness or "multipleness" of everything, doubleness especially as in now and then, here and there, in the hyphenated categorizations of Chinese-Americans, Japanese-Americans, Indian-Americans; the question of identity – how Chinese/American am I? how American do I want to be? how Chinese should or need or can I remain?; the unshakable, ever-present past in the form of personal as well as national as well as ethnic history; the conflict of the generations, exacerbated by dislocation; the issue of remembering or forgetting as in the pithy saying that the son wants to forget what the grandson wants to remember; the establishing of new ties, the making of new communities; expressions of the will to survive and prevail; the return journey as visit or remigration. This is not a comprehensive list but it serves to illustrate the universality of the immigrant experience. In the same vein, Eva Hoffman states that "exile is the archetypal condition of contemporary lives" (Hoffman, 197).

The religious trope of life as pilgrimage, significantly extant in both Western and Eastern cultures, comes to mind as a summarizing heading for these aspects of life in our times. It is the life of in-between, nevermore, never-the-same. No one steps into the same river twice, ancient wisdom which the immigrants live. "My life is an ongo-

ing gymnastics class," a recent immigrant friend told me, "new exercises daily for a person already out of breath, and no break, ever."

III

In the remaining part of this essay I would like to sketch a typical life and a typical text and then in conclusion reflect on how these new immigrant writings relate to or inform our current thinking about literature.

Some of the new names, writers dealing with the immigrant experience although not necessarily first generation immigrants themselves, are Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan (both second generation Chinese American), Gish Jen, David Wong Louie, Shawn Wong, Frank Chin, Fae Myenne Ng (Chinese Americans); Hisaye Yamamoto, Ruth Sasaki, Sylvia Watanabe, Wakako Yamauchi (Japanese Americans) and Joy Kogawa (I mention her for the excellence of her work although she is strictly speaking Japanese Canadian); Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Meena Alexander, Bharati Mukherjee (Indian American); Chang-rae Lee, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (Korean American). In a survey less focussed on Asians one would also have to discuss the Latino or Hispanic American writers and the Filipino American writers and the Pacific Islanders – the list is sheer endless. For the sake of illustrating the Asian contribution it might be useful to concentrate on what many consider a representative life, Bharati Mukherjee's, who is also the author of representative immigrant texts, in particular her much acclaimed novel *Jasmine* (1989) that has also become the subject of much heated dispute.

Bharati Mukherjee was born in Calcutta, India, in 1940, as the daughter of a wealthy Bengali Brahmin family. At age seven she was sent to Swiss and English schools, then received her B.A. and M.A. respectively from the university of Calcutta and the University of Baroda. In 1961 she came to the US where she attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop and received her PhD in English and Comparative Literature from the University of Iowa in 1969. There she also met her husband, writer and professor Clark Blaise with whom she moved to Canada in 1966 where she taught at McGill University in Montreal. In

1980 she and her family moved to the US where she taught at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Skidmore College (Saratoga Springs), and Queen's College (New York City); currently she teaches at the University of California at Berkeley. She has published two collections of short stories, six novels and, together with Clark Blaise, two documentaries.

If one takes a globe and traces her movements from continent to continent and place to place, one marvels at the crazy zigzag pattern that emerges. The lack of fixity, of local attachment or rootedness and the inherent psychological upheaval are some of the qualities that make this life representative of many lives at the end of the century, and not only of immigrants' lives. It is interesting to consider that an older term for the course of one's life was and still is '*curriculum vitae*', from '*curre*', to run. Running seems to have something to do with the way authors are compelled to describe their lives, now more than ever. Mukherjee herself has stated that her life "has been a long process of searching for a home" (Moyers, Mukherjee, 3). This searching movement is also the characteristic of many of her fictional protagonists, notably of Jasmine in the eponymous novel.

Jasmine is born in the Punjabi village of Hasnapur in 1965 and because her husband is killed by a Sikh terrorist bomb probably intended for her, flees to the US where she arrives an illegal on the Florida shores, kills a man who rapes her, makes her way to New York City and from there to Iowa where she lives with a banker who has fallen in love with her and wants to marry her. He is shot at by a farmer whom he has denied a loan and is now condemned to life in a wheelchair. Jasmine is pregnant with his child but when a former friend from New York appears she leaves with him for California.

This is just the barest plot outline but it must suffice, first, to demonstrate, the hectic itinerary of this immigrant's life and, second, to raise the question of what it is that Jasmine wants, what it is that she is looking for. In the Iowa banker she might have found safety, acceptance into a community, family life, stability, financial security, appreciation and affection. Evidently these do not satisfy her, and it is this quality of a defiance of expectations, of a refusal to be content with what appears to most people as normal and good and even a

lucky turn of events (the old Cinderella plot: rich banker woos poor immigrant), a refusal to accept pre-given traditional solutions that makes the novel a controversial yet representative text of the new literature of immigration. A safe existence to Jasmine is not in keeping with life as she has experienced it. She has, in Mukherjee's words, a "need for risky adventures" (Moyers, Mukherjee, 4). She is "greedy with wants and reckless from hope" (Mukherjee, 1989, 241). Psychologies will have to be revised, a sense of morality taken into consideration that I have called elsewhere an ethics of impermanence, a tolerance of ambiguities developed if we are to deal fairly with these new lives and the literature that chronicles them. The great attraction of the American scene for Mukherjee is the same as for her itinerant character: "America is an idea. It is a stage for transformation" (Moyers, Mukherjee, 3).

IV

This question of transformation appears to be at the basis of an issue with which contemporary literary theory is grappling. It is implicitly contained in the distinction between the literature of exile, the literature of immigration, and the literature of the diaspora, terms that are obviously referring to much the same texts but see the forces shaping them in a different relation. The tug of the forces is between the culture of origin and the culture of the country of immigration, e.g. India or China versus the US. Simplifying for the sake of the argument, one might say that in the literature of exile the new is rejected in favor of the old, in the literature of immigration the old is – more or less – rejected in favor of the new, and in the literature of the diaspora distinctions such as old and new are rejected in favor of "heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity" (Lim, 1997, 290).

In her earlier work, including *Jasmine*, Mukherjee is very definitely contributing to the literature of immigration, whereas in her novels *The Holder of the World* (1993) and *Leave It to Me* (1997) she approaches the model of hybridity with its paradoxical exacting stance of maintaining difference while establishing and entertaining a productive relation to the new culture, thus transforming this culture it-

self. She has been harshly blamed by some critics for what they understand as giving in, succumbing to the hegemony of colonialist-imperialist-capitalist US culture, terms that in themselves do not adequately describe the reality as she perceives it. If her stance is assimilationist – which means for her "two-way transformationist" –, if she says that America is her home and she feels very American (Moyers, Mukherjee, 3), that is her privilege. It does not mean, however, that she unquestioningly and indiscriminately accepts everything about American society and American culture. The emphasis in Jasmine's story is not on her success but on her survival and on the endless trajectories of her journeys; the point is her wanting, not her getting – rather it is her not-getting, and this is what keeps her going. There is no "happily-forever-after conclusion" to the book as has been irritatingly maintained by some critics (Lim, 1997, 304) against all textual evidence. Jasmine's wanting is an insatiable longing that always seeks to transcend, to move beyond, a quality that is seen by Mukherjee as essentially human and essentially ennobling. In this she joins ranks with novelist Saul Bellow, another immigrant, though not so recent, who, in his latest novel *Ravelstein* (2000) puts it like this: "A human soul devoid of longing is a soul deformed, deprived of its highest good ... " (Bellow, 15).

Mukherjee can be very highly critical of an America that Jasmine calls "perverted" (Mukherjee 1989, 201), and she can be very critical in her assessment of American literature now. Thus she attacks traditional ways of writing: "I am disappointed with the kind of fiction ... which constantly records neat, miniaturized, suburban lives, and small crises, as opposed to the raw, raucous, messy lives that we non-whites are leading Minimalist writing, with its codes, with its shorthand, with its white suburban emphasis, is, I feel, an ostrich-with-the-head-in-the-sand kind of fiction" and "We're going through lives that are larger than real in many ways, we new immigrants. And we are coming with such a hunger to find new meanings. We're coming with so much energy and curiosity in order to make new lives for ourselves, that, to me, those are the big stories to tell, very dense lives to chronicle" (Moyers, Mukherjee, 4). Like Maxine Hong Kingston who bluntly says "So what I have told are the new American stories"

(Moyers, Kingston, 13) Mukherjee sees not just a manner of writing becoming increasingly inadequate for taking the measure of contemporary reality but also "a way of life coming to an end" (Mukherjee, 1989, 29).

Mukherjee nevertheless believes with a depth of faith that is possibly non-Western in transformative powers at work. When her characters are described as "arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud" (Mukherjee, 1989, 214) she wants to know and begins to imagine what might happen behind the cloud. Like another immigrant, Egyptian-born Ihab Hassan, she chooses "work instead of exile" (Hassan, 1996, 464), producing epic tales and realistic fables, sometimes also nonfiction narrative instead of the minimalist items of the so-called "literature of exhaustion". Maxine Hong Kingston also feels the need for a strong personal statement concerning her own genres: "I must write in a way that makes readers care about the people I create on paper. No matter that critics question what my genre is – fiction? nonfiction? – there is a reader in every audience who will ask: 'How's your mother doing?'" (quoted in Lim 1991, 23). What Salman Rushdie says about the novel now applies to the writings of immigrant authors such as Mukherjee and may well indicate the future of American writing: tomorrow will, hopefully, be "postcolonial, ... decentered, transnational, interlingual, cross-cultural" (Rushdie, 50). It will be a writing in all the languages of America.

The divisive tribalism one encounters so often in analyses of the state of American culture and literature may represent the greatest danger to this positive vision of successfully enacted mongrelization/transmogrification/hybridity - everyone has his or her term of choice. I suggest that this still widespread separatism might be counteracted in an exemplary way precisely from the immigrant position as I have tried to describe it. The perspective of the new immigrants may be the vantage point that best allows us to understand and cope with the changing paradigms of our civilization in the process of globalization/transnationalization. In terms of writing, if we follow Mukherjee, what is required now is a movement away from a "fiction of fear" (Moyers, Mukherjee, 4) to one of hope and possibility: "nomadic liv-

ing" - Mukherjee's own term to describe her life (Blaise/Mukherjee, 303) - is already creating the literature of nomadic transnationalism.

Maybe a fitting way to end these literally unsettling considerations should be, in terms of literature, metaphorical, and in terms of philosophy, Emersonian and therefore somewhat transcendental. It might enhance further reflection on these lives and these texts to juxtapose and try to straddle two quotations by immigrant authors who have long since transcended this category and who are as much itinerant, nomad scholars as they are established American writers. Both quotes derive their transcendental aspect from imaging human striving as movement towards the light: "We built our 'homeland' out of expectation, not memory. We came home to sweetness and light within" (Blaise/Mukherjee, 303).

"[...] home is not where you are first pushed into the light but where you gather it into yourself" (Hassan, 1999, 62).

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A Separate Identity Asserted: Agrarian Affinities With European Culture

Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

Students of American culture and history have been aware of the long-standing claims of spokesmen of the American South concerning the distinctive collective identity of their region. One also remembers Thomas Jefferson's extensive tabulation, in which he – drawing on the ancient theory of climate – furnished a pseudo-scientific base for the juxtaposition of New England Yankees and Southerners.¹ Similarly, the growing gap between the two sections of the nation in the Antebellum gave rise to numerous assertions of distinct identities² until the costly internecine war settled the question and put an end to the feasibility of a separate 'Confederate' identity. It is true that the late 19th century saw a reversal of the trend towards reconstructing a homogeneous nation as promulgated in the idealistic claims of the 'Declaration of Independence' by rendering the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution adopted in the 1860s ineffective, thereby petrifying the inequalities in the population of a significant part of the country.³

The increased efforts of the promoters of industrialisation and advocates of the New South meanwhile continued unabated and in the early 20th century caused much unease in the South. The lambasting the whole region received at the hands of H. L. Mencken⁴ provoked the ire of some of the Southern intellectuals who had continued to meet in Nashville since the years of the Great War. The scorn expressed by Northern journalists for the backwardness and religious fundamentalism apparent in the notorious Scopes Trial in Tennessee⁵ prompted a good deal of soul-searching and the Vanderbilt intellectuals, who felt that their regional culture was widely misunderstood and misrepresented, to take up defensive positions. Their reaction to the increasing marginalization of the culture in which they were rooted was the composition of various essays in which a separate identity of the South was asserted,⁶ and eventually the publication of the Agrarian manifesto *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* by 12 Southerners.⁷ This emphatic profession of faith in a re-

gional culture and tradition was, of course, not an isolated event but part and parcel of a trend that gave rise to the positive reassessment of various regional cultures, as Robert L. Dorman has shown in *Revolt of the Provinces*.⁸ But while cultural critics all over the United States expressed wide-spread dissatisfaction with urban living and rapid industrialization,⁹ the Vanderbilt intellectuals had a more specific agenda and made greater efforts towards claiming a separate identity for their part of the country.

But to assume that they were all arch-conservative, parochial thinkers bent on defending a backward culture would be an unjustified simplification. The diversity of views expressed by the members of the Vanderbilt group as described by Richard Gray in *Southern Aberrations*¹⁰ refutes such an assumption. The intellectual ferment in Nashville which accompanied the debates of the Fugitives and which was later manifest in the very intensive correspondence between these young intellectuals and their like-minded associates who came to form the Agrarian group fostered a degree of cosmopolitanism. Robert Brinkmeyer in *Remapping Southern Literature* has recently directed attention to the special significance of the transatlantic links for the spokesmen of the Fugitives and Agrarians and the importance of their preoccupation with pre-modern Europe.¹¹ Brinkmeyer's reminder was anticipated by Michael O'Brien's demonstration of the great significance of European ties for the nineteenth century élite in the South and the importance attributed to the European example by the Vanderbilt group.¹² Even a superficial glance at the history of Vanderbilt University, with which the Fugitives were associated, shows the long cosmopolitan tradition which marks this university more than many homes of academia. Under its Chancellor James H. Kirkland the institution, which had received a generous endowment from the Vanderbilt family in 1873, had taken pride in hiring academic teachers with extensive transatlantic experience, especially with a thorough philological education (scholars like Charles Forster Smith in Classical Studies and W. M. Baskervill in English).¹³ The presence of these highly respected professors at the university, which under Kirkland's long presidency had successfully defended its autonomy and warded off the attempts of the Methodist Church to interfere in the regulation of the

sphere of scholarship,¹⁴ favored a mindset that fostered transatlantic links and the articulation of strong affinities with European institutions observing high standards and cultures with high ideals. Kirkland himself exemplified a cosmopolitan attitude in his youth when he studied in Leipzig (and Berlin) from 1883 to 1886 and captured very vivid impressions of the student life there in his regular correspondence, especially with his mother. He had originally taken German universities as models to be emulated as he professed in a number of essays and speeches.¹⁵

The future coordinator of the Agrarian manifesto, the prominent poet and essayist John Crowe Ransom, had shown a similar openness during his Rhodes scholarship in Oxford between 1910 and 1913, when he used his vacations for extensive travel on the Continent and exhibited a keen interest in music and various national cultures, that of Germany included.¹⁶ It is true, by the time Ransom returned to his *alma mater* to take up a teaching position, Kirkland, who had managed to make Vanderbilt one of the leading private schools in the American South, was able to laud the progress U.S.-colleges had made, pointing to many professional schools that had been created, stressing the specific achievement and distinct character of American universities.¹⁷ But the sense of an elective affinity and relationship to continental European universities, no doubt, persisted not only among indefatigable eulogists of German universities like Professor Herbert Sanford.¹⁸ The years immediately following Ransom's return to his alma mater, of course, saw the catastrophe of the demolition of the erstwhile recognized model of German intellectual culture in the USA. The propaganda campaign of the 'Committee on Public Information' masterminded by George Creel and the pressures towards homogenization in the nation led to the silencing of voices persistently claiming an affinity with that part of Central Europe¹⁹ where so many of the Vanderbilt faculty had studied and temporarily ended the opposition to the American mainstream supported by transatlantic models. Chancellor Kirkland made sure that in his faculty even very articulate Germanophile professors like Sanford toed the official line after the declaration of war.²⁰ With the end to these political pressures and the disclosure of the machinations and strategic misrepresentations of the

'Committee on Public Information' a recovery of former ties with Continental European culture might have been possible. A complete reversal, however, did not take place, though several of the Fugitives and of the future Agrarians responded creatively to modernist trends originating in the Old World. That they came to search for cultural models different from those of the American mainstream which could assist them in their desire to assert the separate identity of their region is arguably related to the mindset prevalent at their *alma mater* in the preceding decades.

The various factors which prompted the expatriation of thousands of Americans to Continental Europe in the 1920s also led the poet and essayist John Peale Bishop (1892-1944) to take up residence in France. Bishop, whom Allen Tate later won for the Agrarian cause, spent many years in the vicinity of Paris, where he kept in touch with several of the young American writers and artists who had flocked there. Yet he dissociated himself from the New England strain in his family and embraced only one part of his divided American heritage: that of his Virginia rather than of his New England ancestors. Several of his essays reflect his conviction that the pioneer tradition rooted in New England had deteriorated when taken beyond the Alleghanies and had shaped Mid-America and the unbridled self-reliance manifest in the modern and contemporary political mainstream.²¹ He, for his part, valued the customs and courteous manners which had prevailed in an Atlantic culture, especially in 18th-century France and in the Old South in Colonial times.²² While looking backwards to the culture of the Enlightenment Bishop gave expression to an uneasy awareness that everything valuable was in jeopardy. He also feared that Europe itself would submit to the American worship of expansionism, which would lead to impoverished lives. In a 1931 letter to his friend Allen Tate he offered a nostalgic assessment of contemporary trends and claimed that "with us Western civilization ends".²³

The assertion of the function of Southern intellectuals as the last torchbearers of a humanistic heritage embattled in an industrialized world threatened by "Fordism" was in tune with the position Bishop's correspondents and associates had meanwhile taken up. It was expressed by several other intellectuals in the diverse group of men of

letters, poets, critics and social scientists who contributed to the Agrarian manifesto of 1930, and in embracing a conservative position rallied to the support of the traditional way of life in the South. They shared the fear that their collective identity was endangered by the progressivist ideology of the advocates of the New South and the American mainstream. But as Richard Gray has recently underlined, the roster of contributors to this manifesto included exponents of diverse positions.²⁴ Among them were eulogizers of the aristocratic virtues of the Old South long gone but nostalgically evoked, such as Stark Young.²⁵ Their ranks also included advocates of the concrete experience of living 'by the soil', and spokesmen of yeomen farmers and their distinct contribution to the separate identity of Southern Culture (cf. Andrew Lytle).²⁶ Yet, their divergent views came together in their rejection of submission to the gospel of progress held sacred in America, and prompted an assertion of a separate identity of their region. Aligning the South with historical phases of societies and national cultures in 'Old' Europe the poets and critics John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate among the Agrarians evoked a sense of elective affinities to European cultures – to Britain in the case of Ransom, to France in that of Tate.²⁷ Their conviction gradually took shape before they articulated this view in their essays in the Agrarian manifesto and in their extensive correspondence. Their notions, though in more indirect and more implicit form, are also reflected in some poems mirroring their transatlantic experiences and their ruminations on cross-Atlantic ties.

Considering the three fruitful and stimulating years he had spent as a Rhodes scholar in Oxford it comes as no surprise that John Crowe Ransom was to refer in his keynote essays to the agrarian manifesto, "The Statement of Principles" and "Reconstructed, but Unregenerate" to the virtues of the old British model and to suggest close ties between Southern ecological and conservative attitudes and the lifestyle practiced in the English provinces long ago.²⁸ Earlier, long before he fully embraced regionalism, for instance, in 'The South – Old or New' (1928) and in 'The South Defends Its Heritage' (1929), Ransom had contributed an intriguing poem to *The Fugitive* of 1923, entitled "Philomela", which he himself regarded highly. In this poem of eight

stanzas he wittily sketches the progress of lyrical poetry – its *translatio* – by expanding the mythological tale of the flight of Philomela from her Thracian pursuer to Oxford.

The poem evokes a European panorama including Rome, France, Germany and England, and addresses wider problems of cultural transatlantic transfer. The emblematic bird of Romantic poetry, whose presence or absence in parts of Europe or in the United States had been commented upon by Thomas Jefferson or Nikolaus Lenau, the Romantic Austrian poet, often in connection with negative assessments of the potential for high art in the countries visited,²⁹ is employed in an ostensibly self-critical analysis of the limited capacity of the American speaker (and his fellow-countrymen) for sophisticated, mellifluous poetry. Ransom's lyrical I straightforwardly (yet, perhaps, slightly ironically)³⁰ concedes on behalf of his country of origin that his ears are "too imperfect" for the "bird's delicate dirge" (stanza 4). He grants that the democratic society he comes from, with its "cloudless boundless public place", precludes 'a fair hearing' of the nightingale's song by the "inordinate race" inhabiting it. The ambiguity implied in our assessment of this statement is the result of the witty phrasing of the stages of the bird's flight and of the underlying juxtaposition of cultures. In the preceding stanzas Ransom uses some national stereotypes³¹ mirroring his Anglophile orientation and his dislike of the Germans as a result of impressions, derived less during several extended visits to Germany from Oxford, but rather from his experiences in the Great War.³² Despite his seemingly straightforward statement in a letter to Robert Graves, who appreciated the poem ("my fellow-countrymen seem to be without a faculty of song"),³³ the phrasing of the verse does not remove the potential for double-edged irony, which the humorous allusions to the speaker's nocturnal activities in Oxford foster.³⁴

Several years later Ransom returned to the topic in another poem in which his own regional background is definitely given more prominence. "Crocodile", originally entitled "Amphibious Crocodile", and published first in December 1925 and (with many revisions placed next to "Philomela" in a later edition of his *Collected Poems*),³⁵ deals with his international experience in a whimsical tone. In the eighteen

stanzas of the poem, which fuses sophisticated diction and colloquial vigor, Ransom facetiously describes the adventures of a country hick temporarily impersonating a cosmopolitan. Quite literally an amphibious being, the crocodile, later called "Old Robert Crocodile", not only dresses up before venturing forth on the Grand Tour to admire the sights of Paris, London and Oxford, but also continuously feels the pull of his true nature. Before establishing the proper connections and getting fully involved in the social life in Oxford, the true being of the visitor asserts itself when he is confronted with the trenches of World War I in France.

And suddenly he cries, I want to see a trench!
Up in the North eventually he sees one

Which is all green slime and water; whereupon lewd
Nostalgic tremors assail him; with strangled oaths
He flees; he would be kicking off his clothes
And reverting to his pre-Christian mother's nude.

The trench filled with water reminds him of his natural element and prompts atavistic urges of reverting to his natural state of being and of returning to his native habitat, the swamps. Eventually the 'macrocephalus' animal, whose large teeth and large toes reveal his true nature,³⁶ vanishes from the scene of his social successes and returns home. There he sheds his pretty clothes and, in what is a witty allusion to a Miltonic simile about the sea monster Leviathan, immerses himself in its native waters: "Floating he lies extended nearly a rood, / And quite invisible but for the end of his nose."³⁷

While the reader is entertained by the satirical touches in the poem, which seems to make fun of American tourists but also of expatriates who appear as social dandies, the retreat to the native habitat seems also to satirize cosmopolitan pretensions and, at least obliquely, to embrace a comforting regional position.³⁸

Ransom's remarks in his keynote essay in the manifesto show that in his defense of the collective identity and specificity of Southern culture the traditional values of Western Europe are called upon. But the model of Germany is no longer applicable as Fordism, the Yankee

ideology of progress and the vast industrial machine are also associated with and likened to a "Prussianized State".³⁹ In the following years Ransom was engaged in ambitious critical projects which permitted him to arrive at a more balanced conception of his native region and his relationship vis-à-vis European culture and heritage. He planned to compose a comprehensive defense of Agrarianism during the (thoroughly enjoyable) Guggenheim year 1931/2 with his family in the south of England, near Exeter, which was apt to enhance his feelings for his host country.⁴⁰ Yet several of his essays from those years signal his gradual withdrawal from political controversy and from Agrarianism generally, and the development of the stance of the future 'New Critic'.

Ransom's sympathy for the culture of rural Britain mirrored in his earlier agrarian essays contrasts with the appeal of the lifestyle and culture of rural France to Allen Tate, Ransom's most distinguished pupil and later colleague. Originally Tate was inclined to adopt a kind of cosmopolitanism and to embrace T. S. Eliot's brand of modernism. It was only later, after his two years in New York following his graduation, that he came to share Ransom's respect for his regional culture, which he had originally described as "defective in its literary tradition".⁴¹ Tate's early ambivalence and uncertainty vis-à-vis the heritage of his own region finds expression in the tortuous reflections of the 'modern Southerner' hesitating at the entrance to the confederate cemetery in his "Ode to the Confederate Dead". Throughout the complex history of its revisions until its inclusion in *The Swimmers and Other Poems* (1936)⁴², the voice of the poem mirrors the inevitable distance of the speaker to the ideas and ideals of the past. It was in connection with his two biographical projects, the books commissioned on Stonewall Jackson (1928) and on Jefferson Davis (1929), that Tate's intellectual perspective was sharpened and began to align the South and Europe.⁴³ The two Guggenheim Fellowships Tate and his wife Caroline Gordon received in 1928/9 and 1932/3 respectively helped him to focus on the European literary tradition and its heritage.⁴⁴ Many letters, several essays and a number of complex poems reflect this gradually deepened awareness, which also shaped his contribution to the manifesto of 1930. Poems like "Message from

Abroad" or "The Mediterranean" reflected in different ways Tate's rumination on transatlantic differences and his inclination to compare the significant heritage in the Old World with life in his own region.

In various essays on Southern culture Tate made his region appear more as a manifestation of European culture and less as related to the rest of the New World. While Tate's poem "Message from Abroad", inspired in 1929, obliquely reflects a sense of the shortcomings and the absences of glamour in the American sphere,⁴⁵ his negative view of mainstream American culture at that time seems to have been affected by cultural critics active in Europe who had begun turning America into a 'loaded' symbol of the problematical modern age. Tate seems to have responded to an anti-Americanism increasingly popular among European philosophers and religious writers in the first third of the twentieth century. The British Catholic polemicist, Christopher Hollis, the author of *The American Heresy*, and philosophers like Oswald Spengler, two of whose books Allen Tate was to review, confirmed his wariness towards American mainstream culture.⁴⁶

Thus transatlantic voices helped to focus the reservations of Southern intellectuals vis-à-vis a materialist America and confirmed their conception of having natural allies in European national cultures. In a remarkably extensive correspondence the Agrarians formulated a sense of continuity and interconnection between Europe and the South. In the epilogue to his biography of the President of the Confederacy, Tate explicitly called the South "the last stronghold of European civilization in the western hemisphere, a conservative check upon the restless expansiveness of the industrial North".⁴⁷ Anticipating elements of the Agrarian creed Tate saw in the Old South a contentment "to live upon a modest conquest of nature" and not a desire for its complete domination. In his correspondence with Donald Davidson, the most conservative and consistent defender of the South against the Yankee challenge,⁴⁸ Tate was willing to acknowledge the timeless values of European culture and spoke specifically about his conviction that Southerners were, in fact, the last torchbearers of European culture. While Davidson retained his scepticism towards Europe and, on the basis of his experience of World War I, showed suspicion of the Old World, Tate left no doubt about his sense of shar-

ing an Atlantic culture with the Europeans. In fact, he even went so far as to say that, due to the influence of the industrial progressive model transferred from the United States, the European heritage was slipping and in danger of being lost, so that he and his associates and allies appeared "[to be] the last Europeans, there being no Europeans in Europe at present".⁴⁹ In his contribution to the manifesto *Tate*, however, showed his orientation towards a formation long since lost and not realized in traditional Southern culture. When he wrote on Southern religion and speculated on the failure of the South to develop a universal religion such as the one that had given unity to Europe before the Renaissance, it also becomes obvious in retrospect that he had set out on the path eventually leading to his conversion to Catholicism.⁵⁰

At the beginning of his Guggenheim Fellowship, Tate did not refrain from expressing his dissatisfaction with English people (and offered very ungallant comments on English women),⁵¹ though he enjoyed his encounters with several British *literati* in Oxford. A few years later, during his wife's Guggenheim grant, when they returned to France (where they had spent most of 1929 during which Tate displayed some impatience with the members of the 'lost generation' in Paris), Tate came to express great sympathy for rural France and its affinity with his own region. On a tour through the country in the company of fellow-Agrarian Frank Owsley (and the latter's wife), Tate believed he had found in the rural environment of his host country "a confirmation of his Southern Agrarian ideals".⁵² In his letters to Andrew Lytle, Tate, while conceding a personal dislike of Frenchmen, feels compelled to admit that "they seem the most wonderful people in the world, especially here in the South, where life is at its best as with our people".⁵³ Responding to a most congenial setting and enjoyable gregarious experience on the Mediterranean coast at Cassis Tate postulates an elective affinity between the rural folk in the South of France and the people in the southern United States. A heightened awareness of a felicitous encounter also shapes a letter (not included in his published correspondence with Donald Davidson) in which he praises the Provence as a purely agrarian region – offering a potential model for the contemporary South.⁵⁴

Not surprisingly, the congenial atmosphere of the picnic at Cassis, a fishing village between Toulon and Marseille, in the company of Ford Madox Ford and various Parisian friends, also inspired Tate to compose one of his best poems, "The Mediterranean". In it the classical model from the *Aeneid* is invoked in the presentation of a contemporary experience, and classical antiquity and modernity seem to be temporarily fused. The feast they celebrate reenacts the experience of Aeneas, and in a complex process of imaginative Atlantic crossings Tate seems to gain certainty about his own place, which may be regarded as standing in the long western tradition, though its location is in the Western hemisphere.⁵⁵

Where we went in the small ship the seaweed
Parted and gave to us the murmuring shore,
And we made feast and in our secret need
Devoured the very plates Aeneas bore:

[...]

Where we feasted and caroused on the sandless
Pebbles, affecting our day of piracy,
What prophecy of eaten plates could landless
Wanderers fulfil by the ancient sea?

[...]

Let us lie down once more by the breathing side
Of Ocean, where our live forefathers sleep
As if the Known Sea still were a month wide –
Atlantis howls but is no longer steep!

[...]

Now, from the Gates of Hercules we flood

Westward, westward till the barbarous brine
Whelms us to the tired land where tasseling corn,
Fat beans, grape sweeter than muscadine
Rot on the vine: in that land were we born.⁵⁶

Tate thus does not attempt to restore a defunct Southern culture but wants to create something new, the collective identity of a unified culture shaped by rituals and manners related to the original European pattern.⁵⁷

An awareness of the close ties with Western Europe still pervades the essay "The Profession of Letters in the South" (1935), which signaled Tate's gradual withdrawal from involvement in the agrarian project. He continued to support it in a number of essays which appeared in the *American Review* or were later collected in a second symposium, *Who Owns America?*, edited by Herbert Agar and Tate himself in 1936.⁵⁸ In "The Profession of Letters in the South" Tate admits the failure of the planter society of the Old South, in spite of excellent conditions, to leave a "cultural landmark" and establish a "tradition in the arts". Again he sees parallels with France, whose traditional respect for intellectuals is lauded at the outset. It is also claimed that "forms of European feeling and conduct" reminiscent of the situation in France prior to the Revolution and "eighteenth-century amiability and consideration of manners" are still retained in the South.⁵⁹ In view of the absence of publishing houses and an economic base for the arts Tate, however, grants the possibility of expatriation. In contrast to more insistent and narrow-minded defenders of the unique nature of Southern culture like Donald Davidson Tate once again advocates a kind of cosmopolitanism, as the arts in his view have their origin in "a mysterious union of indigenous materials and foreign influences".⁶⁰

Tate's openness to cosmopolitanism had a less stable counterpart in the ideas disseminated by the poet and critic John Gould Fletcher, who, in the course of his life, assumed many identities and fluctuated between many intellectual positions. As Ben F. Johnson's study of his life has made clear,⁶¹ Fletcher felt the appeal of internationalism more than most other creative writers and critics from the South but he seems to have been an expatriate on both sides of the Atlantic. As a member of the Imagists, who had lived partly in Italy and partly in England, he seemed at first cut off from his Southern background⁶² but then aligned himself with the Fugitives and Agrarians, with several of whom he exchanged many letters.⁶³ A prolific writer of essays,⁶⁴ he was ready to provide intellectual and historical maps and to speculate on the roles and functions of the various countries of Europe, especially of Germany, to whose philosophers and thinkers he responded with great enthusiasm.⁶⁵ Fletcher, who had read widely in

European philosophers of history and had come to regard himself as a true mediator between the two hemispheres, whose role was to make major Europeans unknown in America familiar to a wider public, was to give vehement support to the anti-industrial stance of the Agrarians. Having joined the Agrarian group Fletcher contributed an essay on Southern education to their manifesto in which he, somewhat anachronistically, praised Antebellum Academies and tried to disparage the increasing importance of John Dewey in American education.⁶⁶ Quite ready to apply the then popular psychology of nations, which was attracting ever more dubious supporters in those years, Fletcher paradoxically also expressed reservations vis-à-vis the increasingly belligerent nationalism in Europe, and temporarily embraced the cosmopolitan views associated with the group advocating a "New Europe". In contrast to Ransom and Tate he thus exhibited a restlessness of spirit while his mind proved hospitable to many theories and speculations disseminated at that time. Temporarily showing an inclination towards Marxist views but also intermittently responding to Fascist concepts of society, Fletcher shifted his positions fairly frequently.⁶⁷ Despite all his inconsistencies Fletcher steadfastly defend Southern mores like more unwavering supporters of a collective Southern identity, such as Donald Davidson. The latter, who advocated political sectionalism in his essays in *The American Review* and other journals, and in books from the 1930s onwards,⁶⁸ had, however, little use for Europe in his championship of an authentic and specific Southern culture.

The very problematical stance J. G. Fletcher adopted on the basis of ideologies he had encountered in the Old World once again reveals the fact that for many Southerners in the first half of the twentieth century Europe remained a central phenomenon. As has been shown, it often functioned as a catalyst in their attempts to maintain distinct traditions or establish a new collective identity. Paradoxically, the existing ties with Europe at the same time also inspired various spokesmen of African Americans⁶⁹ to take up a position against the reactionary racial politics of the advocates of white hegemony in their 'section' and in the U.S.A. as a whole. The temporary residence in Europe of spokesmen, artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance such as Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, or Countée Cullen just as that

of their predecessors W. E. B. Du Bois or Mary Church Terrell shows that the notion of an Atlantic culture was also suitable to undermine the bastion of traditional Southern values put forward by the defenders of an agrarian South. In fact, in the eyes of many African American observers various countries of Europe appeared as positive counter-images in their attempt to reshape the institutions and regulations in their own country. Their practice, indeed, highlights the paradox that blatantly incompatible views were supported by reference to various aspects of European culture. While African Americans were inclined to use Europe – taken as a 'real place [or] a very commodious signifier'⁷⁰ – as an irritant for those 'conservative' minds who, in defending Southern mores and traditions, also inevitably sought to justify the (indefensible) politics of segregation, which appeared to them as part of the Southern way of life⁷¹, many white intellectuals looked to the Old World as a stable prop in their own struggle with the homogenizing economic and political forces of mainstream America.

Notes

¹ Cf. his letter of 1785 to Marquis de Chastellux in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. viii, Princeton 1953, 468: "In the North they are cool / sober/ laborious / [...] In the South they are fiery / Voluptuary [sic] / indolent / [...]".

² Cf. William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character*, (1957) New York 1961.

³ Cf. legislative measures taken first in the Deep South and the notorious decisions by the Supreme Court, for instance, in the case Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896 (Cf. David Roller and Robert W. Twyman, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Southern History*, Baton Rouge 1979, s. v. "Plessy vs. Ferguson") and various initiatives leading to a disfranchisement of African American voters. Cf. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Chapel Hill 1989, s. v. "Desegregation".

⁴ Cf. Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart", 1917, revised 1920.

⁵ Cf. *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, s. v. "Scopes Trial".

⁶ Cf. some essays by John Crowe Ransom, for instance, "The South: Old or New?" in *Sewanee Review* (1928) and by Allen Tate; see below.

⁷ *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, by Twelve Southerners (1930), New York 1962, Introduction by Louis D. Rubin, Jr.

⁸ Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945*, Chapel Hill 1993.

⁹ Cf., for instance, Lewis Mumford, *The Golden Day*, New York 1926, *The Culture of Cities*, New York 1938, and *Values for Survival: Essays, Addresses, and Letters on Politics and Education*, New York 1946.

¹⁰ Richard Gray, *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism*, Southern Literary Studies, Baton Rouge 2000, 96-154.

¹¹ Robert H. Brinkmeyer, *Remapping Southern Literature: Contemporary Southern Writers and the West*, Athens 2000, 6ff.

¹² Cf. Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History*, Baltimore 1988, esp. 'Italy and the Southern Romantics', 84-111, and *The Idea of the American South 1920-1941*, Baltimore 1979, esp. 128ff. (on Ransom) and 141ff. (on Tate).

¹³ Cf. the ms. of Edwin Mims' autobiographical notes in Vanderbilt Special Collections, 'Edwin Mims Papers', his published tribute to the long-term chancellor *Chancellor Kirkland of Vanderbilt*, Nashville 1940, and his *History of Vanderbilt University*, Nashville 1946, 236ff.

¹⁴ Cf. Mims' account of James Kirkland's successful defense of academic freedom against the authority of a Methodist bishop.

¹⁵ Cf. various lectures and essays on the German model, cf. "German vs. American Universities" published in *The Monteaglean* in August 1887; and his essay "The Influence of German Universities on the Thought of the World", in *The Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church* in July 1890.

¹⁶ He was in Oxford from the fall of 1910 until the summer of 1913. Cf. his letters to various family members, in Thomas D. Young and George Core, eds., *Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom*, Baton Rouge 1985. There are also numerous unpublished letters in the Tennessee State Library and Archives which reflect his favorable impressions of the Continent, for instance in Freiburg and the Black Forest.

¹⁷ Cf. his confident assertions in "Higher Education in the United States of America", *Vanderbilt University Quarterly* 1913.

¹⁸ Cf. his emphatic confession in *The Faith of a Hyphen* (September 19, 1916), Nashville 1916.

¹⁹ Cf. my survey in *Das Deutschlandbild in der amerikanischen Literatur*, Darmstadt 1998, 157ff.

²⁰ For Kirkland's intervention see his notes for wartime speeches at Vanderbilt, and Mims' biography of Kirkland, p. 333.

²¹ Cf., for instance, "The Missing All" and "The Poetry of Mark van Doren" in *The Collected Essays of John Peale Bishop*, which includes also aphorisms and stories, ed. Edmund Wilson, New York 1948, pp. 66-77, 296-300. Cf. also Robert L. White, *John Peale Bishop*, New York 1966.

²² Cf. "The South and Tradition", pp. 3-13, and "The Myth and Modern Literature", pp. 122-8 in *Collected Essays*.

²³ *The Republic of Letters in America: The Correspondence of John Peale Bishop and Allen Tate*, ed. T. D. Young and J. J. Hindle, Lexington 1981, pp. 47f. Richard Gray in *Southern Aberrations* (p. 99) regards this statement as a paradigmatic articulation of the "Southern imagination of disaster".

²⁴ Cf. *Southern Aberrations*, chap. 3, pp. 109-54.

²⁵ Cf. his 'Not in Memoriam But in Defense'. On Stark Young's aristocratic attitude and message in his romantic stories, like *So Red the Rose*, cf. Gray, *Southern Aberrations*, pp. 110-27.

²⁶ Cf. his essay in the manifesto, 'The Hind Tit', and his advocacy of agrarian simplicity in his family chronicle, cf. Gray, *Southern Aberrations*, pp. 127-51.

²⁷ Among the voices heard in the agrarian manifesto were also those of sceptics who had little use for and no sense of affinity with Continental Europe. His experience in the Great War had alienated Donald Davidson so that he did not expect anything from the Old World for a defense of a Southern identity.

²⁸ Cf. *I'll Take My Stand*, p. 5.

²⁹ Cf. Thomas Jefferson's 'Letter from Languedoc', in which he responds to the beautiful song of the nightingales along the Garonne, and, (unnecessarily) claims that nightingales are absent in the country north of the Alps, which, through a dubious syllogism, establishes the absence of poetic voices in the same region. (Facsimile reprint and transcript of this letter, Monticello, Charlottesville, VA 1956.) Conversely, Nikolaus Lenau, after his seemingly frustrating visit to the United States, maintains that nightingales cannot live in such an environment, cf. Dan Diner, *Verkehrte Welten: Antiamerikanismus in Deutschland: Ein historischer Essay*, Frankfurt/Main 1993, pp. 41-50 and Manfred Durzak, "Nach Amerika. Gerstäckers Widerlegung der Lenau-Legende", in: M. Durzak, ed., *Das Amerika-Bild der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*, Stuttgart 1979. Cf. also its fictional version in Ferdinand Kürnberger's *Der Amerika-Müde* (1855).

³⁰ Cf. Louis D. Rubin's reading in *The Wary Fugitives: Four Poets and the South*, Baton Rouge 1978, 27f.

³¹ Cf. stanza 2, line 3: "She [the nightingale] has even appeared to the Teutons, the swilled and gravid". The phrase suggests the bibulous character and the corpulence of the Germans with the negative connotations of 'swill'.

³² Ransom's earlier desire to show fairness to the Germans in spite of his predisposition in favor of his host country Britain is reflected in his contribution on the contrasted claims of the German Empire and the United Kingdom in the Great War in "The Question of Justice", *Yale Review* IV, July 1915, 684-98. Cf. his *Selected Letters* and his unpublished correspondence in the Tennessee State Library and Archives, which reflect Ransom's enjoyment of music and philosophy in Germany; cf. his very positive impressions during visits to and longer vacations in Germany and his encounters with German-Americans evincing good sense and kindness, for instance, in Pension Kircher in August 1912. On his European experiences generally cf. also Thomas Daniel Young, *Gentleman in a Dust Coat: A Biography of John Crowe Ransom*, Baton Rouge 1976, pp. 40-61. There are, however, some errors concerning some dates of trips, which are corrected in the edition of his letters: *Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom*, eds. T. D. Young and George Core, Baton Rouge 1985.

³³ *Selected Letters*, p. 111.

³⁴ Cf. Rubin, *The Wary Fugitives*, p. 27f., but cf. also Robert Buffington, *The Equilibrist: A Study of John Crowe Ransom's Poems, 1960-1963*, Nashville 1967, p. 88-90, where it is argued that in the concluding lines the 'tone of regret' is pure.

³⁵ Ransom's indefatigable inclination to revise his poems after their publication have made him a natural subject for a doctoral theses. Cf. Cecilia Lampp Linton, "A Textual Variorum of John Crowe Ransom's *Selected Poems* (1969)", submitted at the Catholic University of America in 1991. That the poet was never satisfied with his corrections is apparent in his own copy of the *Selected Poems* of 1969, with its various corrections in ink, cf. Vanderbilt University Special Collections, 'John Crowe Ransom Papers', box 4.

³⁶ Cf. stanza 2.1, "And if he had had not water on his brain,...", and stanza 7, line 3, "Who is the gentleman having teeth so large?", and stanza 9, "He is too miserably conscious of his bunion / And toes too large for the aesthetic regimen."

³⁷ Cf. the original version in *The Fugitive* 4, December 1925. It was even closer to the Miltonic simile in book 1, lines 195 f. of *Paradise Lost*: Cf. "Amphibious Crocodile" line 71: "Floating he lies extended many a rood"

and Milton: "Prone on the flood, extended long and large / Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge."

³⁸ Cf. Louis Rubin, *The Wary Fugitives*, p. 60-62.

³⁹ Cf. *I'll Take My Stand*, p. 8. Cf. his essays pp. xxxvii -xlvi, and 1-27.

⁴⁰ Cf. e.g. his unpublished letter to Donald Davidson from a cottage on the Devon coast, Dec. 13, 1931, in Special Collections, Vanderbilt University, and his two letters to Allen Tate in *Selected Letters*, p. 204 ff..

⁴¹ In "Last Days of the Charming Lady", published in *The Nation* in October 1925, Tate conceded the shortcomings of the 'Old South' and its tradition. (cf. Rubin, *The Wary Fugitives*, p. 102).

⁴² *The Swimmer and Other Poems*. New York, rpt. 1970.

⁴³ On the intellectual career of Allen Tate cf. especially O'Brien, *The Idea of the American South*, pp. 136-61 and Gray, *Southern Aberrations*, pp. 96-9.

⁴⁴ Cf. Tate's extensive correspondence and recently the first biography by Thomas A. Underwood, which explores the impact of his psychological complexes and troubles until 1939. Cf. *Allen Tate: Orphan of the South*, Princeton 2000.

⁴⁵ Cf. also Joseph C. Schöpp, *Allen Tate: Tradition als Bauprinzip dualistischen Dichtens*, Bonn 1975, p. 150.

⁴⁶ On Tate's interest concerning Christopher Hollis' book, cf. O'Brien, *The Idea of the American South*, pp. 141ff. Cf. also Allen Tate, "Spengler's Tract Against Liberalism", *American Review* 3 (1934), 41-7. Generally, on the impact of European philosophers who turned America into a dubious symbol of modernity cf. James Ceaser, *Reconstructing America*, New Haven 1997. On anti-Americanism in Europe after World War I cf. also C. Vann Woodward, *The Old World's New World*, New York 1991, esp. pp. 34ff., 46 ff.

⁴⁷ Cf. Allen Tate, *Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall, A Biographical Narrative* (1929), pb. rpt. Nashville 1998, pp. 287. Cf. Brinkmeyer, *Remapping Southern Literature*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Cf. Mark G. Malvasi in *The Unregenerate South: The Agrarian Thought of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson*, Baton Rouge 1997, pp. 153-219.

⁴⁹ Cf. letter of Aug. 1929, *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate*, J. T. Fein and T. D. Young, eds., Athens, GA 1974, p. 230. O'Brien in *The Idea of the American South* was the first to draw attention to this key passage.

⁵⁰ Cf. his explicit comments in his private correspondence, for instance, February 18, 1929, a letter to Donald Davidson, and the commentary by Mal-

vasi, *The Unregenerate South*, especially p. 93 ff. - Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion" are in *I'll Take My Stand*, p.p. 155-75.

⁵¹ Cf. *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate*, p. 217ff.

⁵² O'Brien, *The Idea of the American South*, p. 154.

⁵³ Thomas D. Young and Elizabeth Sarcone, eds., *The Lytle-Tate Letters*, Jackson, MS 1987, p. 63. Cf. "I think you saw some of rural France, but we have really seen it. It is the most impressive experience of that kind I have ever had. It is perfect Agrarianess."

⁵⁴ "Have you ever been in Provence? If I were not all resentment at being abroad at all, I should think it the most wonderful foreign country I have seen. This is real, pure agrarianism, and it will outlast all the upheavals of Europe, as it outlasted the Roman Empire." (Davidson Papers, Special Collections, Vanderbilt University, letter of October 9, 1932, from Toulon). This unpublished letter is also referred to in Malvasi, *The Unregenerate South*, p. 130.

⁵⁵ Cf. Rubin, *The Wary Fugitives*, p. 306, cf., however, Schöpp's more sceptical view of the resolution of this poem, p. 168f. The importance of this text in Tate's oeuvre is apparent in his comments on its genesis and composition in "Speculations", *Southern Review N. S.* 14 (1977), 226-32.

⁵⁶ "The Mediterranean", cf. *The Swimmer and Other Poems*. New York, rpt. 1970, pp. 3f.

⁵⁷ Cf. Malvasi on Tate's 'Agrarian faith' in *The Unregenerate South*, p. 114ff.

⁵⁸ *Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence*, New York 1936.

⁵⁹ Rpt. in Allen Tate, *Essays of Four Decades*, Chicago 1968, pp. 517-34, esp. 521.

⁶⁰ *Essays of Four Decades*, 531.

⁶¹ Ben F. Johnson, *Fierce Solitude: The Life of John Gould Fletcher*, Fayetteville 1994.

⁶² Cf. his early prose poetry "The Old South", or "The Passing of the South", in *Selected Poems of J. G. Fletcher*, selected and introduced by L. Carpenter and Leighton Rudolph, Fayetteville 1988, pp. 163f., 167ff. For his own perspective on his restless life, cf. his autobiography, John Gould Fletcher, *Life Is My Song: the Autobiography of John Gould Fletcher*, New York 1937.

⁶³ Cf. John Crowe Ransom's letter to Allen Tate in *Selected Letters*, p. 166. Fletcher's connection with the Fugitives was revived in 1926, and his corre-

spondence especially with Tate but also with Donald Davidson was fairly intense during his London exile between 1927 and 1933.

⁶⁴ Some of his many essays, especially on other poets and writers and on art and philosophy, are accessible in *Selected Essays of John Gould Fletcher*, ed. Lucas Carpenter, Fayetteville 1988.

⁶⁵ His partiality for Germany and its crucial role in world politics was probably also due to his heritage, as his grandmother on his maternal side had her roots in north Central Germany. (Cf. *Life Is My Song*, p. 5). In "Germany and the Future of Europe", published in various issues of *The New Age*, Fletcher developed his peculiar theories of global trends which he was to explicate in more detail in his book *The Two Frontiers* (publ. in 1930).

⁶⁶ Cf. "Education, Past and Present", in *I'll Take My Stand*, 92-121.

⁶⁷ Cf. Johnson, *Fierce Solitude*, 203-11.

⁶⁸ Cf. 'Where Regionalism and Sectionalism Meet', 1936, and *Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States: The Attack on Leviathan* (1938), rpt. New Brunswick, NJ 1991. Cf. *The Unregenerate South*, 153-219.

⁶⁹ Cf. Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840-1980*, Urbana, IL (1991) 1993.

⁷⁰ Cf. William Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, Princeton, 1994, p. ix.

⁷¹ Cf., for instance, Robert Penn Warren's questionable attempt to deal with this issue in the agrarian manifesto, in "The Briar Patch", in *I'll Take My Stand*, 246-64.

Privatizing Identity in the Global City

Robert Fisher

This essay is concerned with how contemporary identity interacts with spatial developments and political economy to diminish public life and the resolution of social problems. It assumes that the world is dramatically changing, experiencing an epochal transformation equal to that of the industrial revolution of the 19th century. One of the elements of this transformation has been the shift to an increasing privatization of identity, life and society in the past twenty five years throughout the globe. In a nutshell, this essay asks what is the future of public life, let alone public activism, in an increasingly private world. It argues that the construction of increasingly private identities undermines the potential for democratic life and resistance. It's sweep is intentionally broad, discussing a phenomenon of global proportion and reach. But the essay is grounded in a closer examination of these trends in Houston, Texas, in order to situate the argument and establish a basis of comparison to other sites.¹

Private World

A wide diversity of literature from different quarters proposes that we increasingly live in a private as opposed to a public world. A public world encourages "open, inclusive, and effective deliberation about matters of common and critical concern" (Ryan, 259). Or the public is tied to the state and is fundamentally about "promoting the public or common welfare of its rightful members" (Habermas, 1989, 2). The public realm is about the creation and maintenance of society and existence in a social world that is larger than one's self or one's family. Public life is life at work, at school, in communities, and through national and international citizenship. The public realm is the world of contact with acquaintances and strangers, including a broad diversity of people.

In a multitude of ways, commentators note the world in which we live and work is increasingly moving away from the public, away

from the social, and towards a preoccupation with the private. This essay blends their critiques into three features. Our world is rapidly and increasingly becoming focused on and dominated by *a culture of private individuals, a physical world of private spaces, and a political economy of private institutions.*

These developments are certainly not unprecedented (Warner, 1968; Fisher and Karger, 1997). Increasing individualism, the fluidity of public life and space, and the expansion and contraction of the private and public sectors, all have long histories. Ever since the Puritan commonwealths collapsed, American society has been highly individualistic; this is the core of the Lockean political theory upon which our democratic civilization rests. In the 1830s, de Tocqueville (1988) found individualism to be the distinguishing feature of American life, especially when compared with the more collectivistic mentality of Europe. Indeed, American capitalism has almost always been characterized by a strong antagonism to public institutions helping the poor and oppressed and by a preference for private institutions such as business or private charity taking care of things. Because capitalism has been the engine that drives American society, what capitalism has done well, American society has done well. What it has done poorly, such as address the public and social needs that exist outside the world of profit, American society has done poorly (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Warner, 1968).

Any dualism such as public and private underestimates the complex interaction between the two, not to mention divergent uses of the terms. Private churches do public work; for years public government in Houston was led by the initiatives of the private Houston Chamber of Commerce; businesses go "public" when they become stock-issuing corporations; convention used to counsel women not to go out in public unaccompanied; people do not expose their privates in public. Moreover, because the ownership of space is not static, neither are definitions of public and private: take for example current public spaces such as the Palace at Versailles or even Houston's answer to it, Miss Ima Hogg's house, once the epitome of private exclusive space.

These caveats, and others aside, the new privatization of life is occurring with a massive speed and grander reach than ever before,

accelerating the three trends and posing serious challenges not only to those interested in addressing social problems but to society in general. Moreover, this dynamic reflects the complex interaction between identity, geography, and political economy.

Culture of Private Individuals

As to identity, many social commentators argue that Americans, and much of the rest of the world, are becoming increasingly self-absorbed with the private and the personal. Putnam argues that people are moving increasingly away from a concern with the larger society, away from commitment to a public life (Putnam, 1996). Bellah and his associates (1985) see this vividly in the contemporary penchant for psychotherapy - the sharing of a "first language of individualism" and the goals of self-actualization - by large numbers of the citizenry across the political spectrum. Reality is explained through a lens of individual will, personal life, and personal morality. For example, even the United States Army, an organization which seeks to subvert the individual will of soldiers to its collective goals, has for years promised potential recruits to "Be all you can be."

Sennett (1974) and Lasch (1978) see this penchant for the personal as a retreat from the world and into narcissism. So did Hannah Arendt (quoted in Sennett, 1990), who said that the retreat into the personal, what she called "the fear of making contact," reflects "a lack of the will to live in the world" (135). As society seems to become more difficult, divided, and dangerous, the increasing fear of the social world causes people to turn inward to a preoccupation with themselves and their families. Martin and O'Connor (1989) propose that the focus on individual rights, freedom, and opportunity discourages Americans from "seeing the impact of the social context on their lives." Others, including Murray Bookchin (1987) see a world in which this heightened identity of individualism turns once public citizens into private consumers, everything and everyone being defined by the "bottom line" and reduced to economic men and women.

A world that overemphasizes the culture of private individuals turns the private domains of self and family, of private intimate mat-

ters, into the *proper* arenas and concerns of life. If public life is the "open, inclusive, and effective deliberation about matters of common and critical concern" (Ryan, 1992, 259), what comes to pass for matters of concern in a private world are personal intimate ones. Public life becomes all about private life. One only has to watch *TV*, not simply the crudest American talk shows, which daily in engage millions the most intimate matters of personal life that pass for, or at least take the place of, public deliberation about common and critical concerns. The political becomes personal and the personal gets more personal. This relationship is sometimes confused as the personal always being political, but in terms of feminist theory, the personal is political only when there is a social context and ideology which elevates the personal to a collective issue - such as a critique of patriarchy elevates who cleans the house into a political issue. In the absence of this, the personal is most often personal.

As identity becomes more individualized, as things become more and more personal, this culture of private individuals influences the identification and resolution of social problems. The dominant discourse of individualism makes social change and collective efforts more difficult. To the extent that discourse remains focused on individuals, so do discussions of problems and solutions. Witness contemporary debates about the nature of problems such as poverty, homelessness, AIDS, and so forth. When government is not being blamed, the victims are for their alleged individual shortcomings. They are lazy, unintelligent, mentally unstable, promiscuous, or simply tied to a deviant culture (underclass, homosexual, homeless, etc.). The problem is individual and therefore so must be the solution - individuals should work their way out of poverty; parents are responsible for kids not doing well in schools; if the society is too violent, individuals should pack a handgun, etc. In short, no social problems would exist if everyone who had a problem solved it individually. Likewise, in a culture of heightened individual identity, viewing problems as social or collective - whether poverty, sexism, racism, and so forth - ,or calling for collective solutions - such as government intervention, social policy, or mass action - is deemed inappropriate in a context where these issues are defined as individual problems with

individual causes and solutions. A sense for society, a sense for the collective, is diminished by a heightened identity of individualism as represented in the larger culture of private individuals. (Fisher, 1990)

Poverty, like everything else, is a product of individual failings and getting out of poverty, likewise, can only be resolved by individual will and effort. The culture of private individuals promotes a mindset comparable to the ideas of late- nineteenth century social Darwinism. In Houston, for example, the former mayor and head of the Chamber of Commerce, Louie Welch, once noted, in a related fashion, that

the free market place has functioned in Houston like no other place in America. It has a method of purging itself of slums. No city is without poor people, but the opportunity not to be poor is greater [in Houston] than in most cities. The work ethic, and opportunities, are strong here. (Welch cited in Feagin, 1988, 260).

But Houston's poverty rates, especially in its inner city, are staggering, which is true for much of the state of Texas. At last count there were nearly 400,000 people in the Houston metropolitan area living at or below the poverty level.

Physicial World of Private Spaces

The exaggerated individualized identity, the pervasive culture of private individuals, is the complex product of multiple historical and contemporary factors. Geographers and others influenced by them note increasingly the importance of spatial relationships in developing cultural identity. They note that in the new privatized context, public space declines as private space accelerates, and this decline of public space and the experience of living much of our lives in private spaces, dramatically affects identity, let alone quality of life. Boyte (1992) describes public spaces as "environments that are open, accessible and involve a mix of different people and groups" (6). They also are spaces, like city streets or public parks and beaches, that are "owned" by the people. They have a primarily public function, for people to

gather, walk, jog, play and talk *in public*. Private spaces, conversely, are intentionally designed as limited access, closed places that are restricted to homogenous groups. This can include the house or apartment where one lives, or increasingly proliferating private spaces such as gated communities or shopping malls. In all private spaces, there is a desire to provide a controlled space of order and clarity, one removed from a more unpredictable and complex public space. "On the most physical level," Sennett (1974) writes, the private "environment prompts people to think of the public domain as meaningless" (12). Private spaces are also primarily designed to make money, as with malls or suburban developments, or to provide a closed, exclusive space such as a downtown underground tunnel system or restricted country club.

Mike Davis (1992) captures the condition brilliantly for L.A.:

In Los Angeles, once-upon-a-time a demi-paradise of free beaches, luxurious parks, and 'cruising strips,' genuinely democratic space is all but extinct. In a city of several million yearning immigrants, public amenities are radically shrinking, parks are becoming derelict and beaches more segregated, libraries and playgrounds are closing, youth congregations of ordinary kinds are banned, and the streets are becoming more desolate and dangerous. (227)

Author Philip Lopate, who taught creative writing at the University of Houston for a number of years, once noted in a talk that while he could not say he was "Houston Proud" – a booster slogan of the Chamber of Commerce at that time – he was certainly Houston fond. But his fondness did not extend to what he called "an almost sensational lack of public space and public life." For Lopate, the Galleria indoor mall, complete with an indoor ice skating rink, was his "idea of hell." The underground tunnel system downtown, which enabled business people to travel between buildings, avoiding both Houston's heat and humidity as well as its city streets, reflected a "privatization" of public space, a turning away from the real city, an interiorization of city life (Lopate, 1984, 20). Needless to say, the streets of downtown were used primarily by poor people, most of them people of color,

who shopped there and used the bus system for which downtown was a hub.

In terms of addressing social problems and building public life, as space disaggregates and people are separated by larger distances, the simple act of trying to physically bring people together to build a sense of public life is made much harder. To the extent that citizens and space are reduced to their market function, that is purely as workers and consumers rather than also as citizens, the struggle to redefine citizenship in social terms becomes more difficult. Teenagers in Houston hanging out at the Galleria is not the same as thirty years before, when I hung out on the streets of Newark. The privatization of space contributes to a decrease in the sense of social ownership and public responsibility. Moreover, the privatization of space is often divisive. Houston's policy to put up street gates, what one commentator called "hate gates," were an effort to bring suburban exclusion to an urban environment by closing one community off from another by placing an ugly locked iron gate between them. The stated goal was to give the neighborhoods more of a sense of community, to lessen "pass through" traffic. But instead these gates turned public space into private space and angered residents on both sides of the divide. (Fisher, 1995) Recently the city has realized the centrality of a dynamic downtown to a successful urban environment. Once a bustling downtown, at least since the late 1960s the downtown was more like a ghost town after work hours and on the weekends, the home space of the poor and social welfare agencies serving them. In the past few years, with a new vision of a revived and more public downtown, there is much more public life in the city's center, with even the affluent moving back into downtown and middle class people walking on city streets during the evening and weekends. And these cultural visits now include not only attending high culture events such as opera and symphony, but also going to baseball games, restaurants, theaters and clubs. But as encouraging as this revived public life is for Houston, the larger trend remains one of centrifugal growth outward from the center. The disaggregation of space with its gated communities and suburban enclaves continues apace. And even in the more inclusive and open places like downtown, public space increasingly means a

sanitized space free of the prior poor and homeless residents and free of the social service agencies that used to meet their needs.

Political Economy of Private Institutions

But perhaps even more influential in creating our contemporary privatized identity is the political-economic context. While people may see themselves as relatively distant from the world of political economy, and while some critics may see culture and identity as independent of the political-economic context, the experience of the past few decades emphasizes not only the interrelationship but the powerful role political economy plays on cultural identity.

One of the most significant international developments in the past twenty five years has been the rise of the "privatization" strategy. Throughout the world, the structures are clear. Dismantle the state, cut labor costs, undermine unions and social change groups, cut costs of capital investment, make business prerogatives and modes of operation the same as society's, or capital will not come your way. The context of privatization forces almost all social and political agendas away from social welfare conceptualizations toward "market-driven" ones. Social problems are ignored as much as possible as new corporate agendas of unfettered capitalism come to dominate global, national, and local decision making. One of the central reasons for the decline of public space and the decline of social change worldwide is this privatization of institutions which delegitimizes the value of the public sector, public institutions, and public activism.

The argument is that in the new global economy, nations or cities can not afford costly social programs. The idea behind privatization is to dismantle the state as much as possible to reduce "social costs" on the corporate sector and the affluent, those segments of the population assumed to be responsible for economic growth. Privatization as used here is a broad orientation toward this objective, which includes but is much more than a specific set of policy alternatives, such as privatizing welfare or prisons.

This essay argues that the undermining of people's sense of the proper and important role of public life and the public sector pushes problems and solutions out of public realms and public spaces into an asocial focus on the individual and the family, and onto communities that lack the resources to address most of them. It is clear that the private sector does not have the funds at its disposal, given its primary responsibility to its stockholders rather than the homeless or the unemployed, to effectively address social problems in more than a token way. The penchant for private charity produced, Schram (1993) argues, a mentality of "welfare by the bag." Massive collective problems like homelessness and hunger are expected to be addressed by private individuals giving a can of tuna fish or beans, producing a bag of goods to tide over the alms recipient. Moreover, the very idea that government is the problem and the marketplace is the solution to social problems poses a most serious barrier to effectively addressing the problem. The "1000 points of light" version of traditional charity did not work in the 19th century (that is why the welfare state developed throughout the industrial world) and it certainly does not work any better for the poor today. As Wolpert proposes in *Patterns of Generosity in America* (1993): "Theory suggests that government expenditures crowd out voluntary contributions and that less government involvement in social support would stimulate private giving. Yet the evidence shows that public and private generosity are more generally complementary." George W. Bush's "faith-based initiatives" and relatively unfunded public policies, such as the "leave no child behind" public education program, underscore the need for public sector social supports and the neglect that ensues from the reliance on non-profit and defunded public efforts. Moreover, discourse has been relegated increasingly to private life and private concerns, so that sophisticated deliberation on public matters declines. And as public deliberation declines, there occurs a dramatic decrease in critical analysis in public life, including an absence of an alternative politics essential to public life.

Related, this essay argues that the policy of dismantling social service programs, begun in the late 1970s, given voice under Reagan, Bush and Clinton, and now accelerating at a breakneck pace under the

second Bush regime, is not only harmful in its failure to address social problems; it undermines democracy, the core of public life. Proponents of privatization argue the opposite, that getting government off people's backs enhances democracy, as if the United States were the Soviet Union. But the dismantling of the public sector in the United States makes it more difficult for people to hold politicians and leaders (once known as public servants) accountable. Where can citizens go in a privatized context to make claims and demands or to engage in democratic debate? Suffice it to say that privatization "diminishes the public sphere - the sphere of public information, deliberation, and accountability." (Starr, 1987, 11) And to the extent that privatization diminishes public life it simultaneously pushes people away from it and into the private sphere. In the new private world alternatives to the private are hard to find, including more collective identities, social solutions, public spaces, and, other than the military and prisons, strong public institutions.

By 1980 Houston was the fourth largest city in the nation in terms of population, surpassing Philadelphia, but it had also achieved recognition as a positive model of a *laissez-faire* free market political economy. One study published by the London-based Adam Smith Institute extolled Houston's as an archetypal, successful "private city", a splendid alternative to the strict planning controls in British cities. (Cited in Feagin, 1988, 2) Houston was a model for free enterprise ideologues, a symbol of urban growth without public land use planning beyond streets and highways, and without very much in the way of public regulation or public costs such as high taxes or expensive social programs. It was said to be the ideal business town. During Houston's boom years, the city prided itself on being a low tax, anti-government, low social service city. Social problems were ignored; the city's boom atmosphere was exalted. The oil crisis of the early 1980s ended the boom but not the free enterprise ethic. As a result of the oil crisis, in the decade after 1982, funds were sparse for economic, let alone social, investment. Business has had to call on government to expand its role, change from being "*laissez-faire*" to a more interventionist local public sector that could support local economic initiatives, at the least through more tax breaks and greater cor-

porate control over development. Government had to become a more active partner in business-initiated programs. It was not as though the so-called "free enterprise city" had altered its political economy; business initiatives have always secured public support when needed. (Fisher, 1992)

Especially since the end of World War II and the Cold War, there has been a tight connection between the private and public sector in Houston. Mid-20th century Houston was said to be ruled by an elite group that met downtown in suite 8f at the Lamar Hotel. Journalist Theodore White commented in 1954 that groups like 8F ruled the whole state.

Texas politics rests on a series of autonomous self-winding groups in each community, consisting of the local aristocracy of enterprise and commercial achievement. These close knit social groups are the respectable people...who run their cities as if the cities were clubs....Some of these little oligarchies may be ...corrupt and crude...others...distinguished by the most extraordinary civic responsibility and honesty. But their common characteristic is a ruthlessness that arrogates to them sole control of political life. (White cited in Dressman, 1994, 117.)

Lawyer Leon Jaworski made a similar comment that if you wanted to know what City Hall would be working on in any given year, one need only to find out what were the priorities of the Chamber of Commerce the year before. With the decline of the Chamber in the late 1970's and the emergence of the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) in 1989 ² the institutional leadership and players changed. (Schaffer, 1989) The Chamber represented real estate developers and speculators; the Partnership is more reflective of the multinational companies that compose the more diverse Houston economy of the past 15 years. But their approach on urban problems, from poverty and racial segregation to air pollution has remained rather consistent: Keep Houston's government as a subordinate partner to business. Conflate economic needs of the corporations with that of the city's. Minimize and keep private, that is among the elites, any public problems

that might tarnish the city's image, certainly any issue that might raise the costs of doing business in Houston.

In terms of air pollution, the dominant view in Houston is similar to that of the business community in the movie "Jaws". Deny the existence of the shark, and once the fin is evident, once people could smell and taste the pollution, then minimize its extent and harm. While Houston is still heavily dependent on the petro-chemical industry, the GHP is an organization of some 130 business representatives, most of whom do not benefit from air pollution. Nevertheless, the Partnership and its predecessors have a long history of stonewalling on the air pollution issue, denying its public implications, and benefiting private companies by lowering their industrial costs. As Terry O'Rourke, a former assistant Harris county attorney, put it, the "overriding ethic of industry and its supporters in the Legislature is 'We keep the air as dirty as we can get away with', when it should be 'How do we make it as clean as we can afford.'" Air pollution, O'Rourke emphasized, "is a form of stealing, of dumping your garbage in my front yard." (Cited in King, 1998, 13) All of which underscores that in a political economy of private institutions, the public good is very narrowly defined, delimited largely to the prerogatives, processes, and needs of business elites. In a city where the public good is so narrowly defined - limited largely to the assumption that whatever makes profits for big business is good for the city and its people - issues of personal identity also become increasingly circumscribed and narrowed. Personal identity is conceptualized in non-public, non-collectivist, highly private and individualized terms. And this reconceptualization of personal identity which excludes the public dimension is not limited to Houston. Houston was once seen by neoconservatives as rather unique, a model free enterprise city. Now its political economy of private institutions – a product of global, national, and local developments – is arguably a worldwide phenomenon. Accordingly, it seems the harsh lesson about the interrelation between political economy and cultural identity spans the globe. Houston is no longer the archetypal private city, as we increasingly live in a private world characterized by a decline of public space, public institutions, and public identity.

This essay does not seek to romanticize public life or undervalue private life. Clearly the world has been plagued with overly collectivized, anti-democratic political cultures, ones in which an autocratic-derived public good was foisted on the populace and raised above everything else, including and especially individual liberty. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to see an argument for a renewed public life as antagonistic to individual liberty and freedom. Philosopher and critic Marshall Berman emphasizes that "individualism... is essential to the open minded public spaces [...] It is only when people are enjoying the private rights of mankind (sic) that they are free to walk in the public sun" (Berman, 1986, 480). Neoliberal and rightwing ideologies have proliferated worldwide, establishing to no small extent a new hegemony of so-called market-driven capitalism. This economic fundamentalism is one of the two new fundamentalisms sweeping the globe, the other being religious fundamentalism. And the more this hegemonic credo emphasizes and reinforces the new private world in which we live, we seem to lack any alternatives. Of course, fragmented resistances abound. Occasionally there are signs of them congealing, as with the anti-globalization movement and the opposition to the Bush regime's war in Iraq. But the hegemony persists, and the very idea of democratic civilization as we know it, our very identity as citizens in a democracy, is at stake, nothing less. If we stay on the current path leading to a more private world, we could end up with a world ruled completely by business prerogatives and decisions, with everything measured by the economic bottom line, with few if any public alternatives. Actually, we are already too close to that reality in the United States. People already find themselves atomized from each other, not only in the communities where they live but in their very own homes, and this will only get worse if current trends continue. A more communitarian, social vision needs to be invoked, but not based on a shared culture, not one just based on people building relationships with each other and building "social capital" as an alternative to economic capital. Rather, we need to rethink our connection with each other and the importance of public life, but do so with an understanding of how our accelerated private identity and the relative absence of

alternatives to it is rooted in contemporary spatial and political economic relations.

American identity has almost always been highly individualized. Unfettered by the restraints of a history prior to capitalism, the United States as a nation exalts individual liberty. People are encouraged to fulfill their individual potential, burdened less than most other nations, certainly those in Europe, by the constraints of tradition and place. Of course, the extent of this individual freedom has always varied in the United States across class, race, gender, and temporal context, as has the extent of collective and public alternatives to a singular focus on individualism. America has not been a land of individual opportunity for everyone at all times, but the culture of individualism is deeply imbedded and cuts across most structural divides and eras. In discussing the current trend to a privatizing identity, what we see today may be, on the one hand, simply the continuation of a grand narrative that runs throughout American culture and experience. On the other hand, what we are experiencing now in terms of the increasing privatizing of identity and life in general may be unique in terms of its velocity, scope, and absence of collective alternatives. The privatization of identity and life seems hegemonic given, at least until very recently, the veritable absence of public alternatives and challenges to it. Unfortunately, this increasing privatized identity is a global phenomenon, not limited to Houston or the United States. (Fisher and Karger, 1997) It may find greatest support and the least resistance in those places, but its reach is much broader. Accordingly, we need to continue to study with care and commitment the nature and peculiarities of American identity and life, but we can no longer do so without an eye to its global dimensions. (Fisher, 1990)

Notes

¹ This approach of looking at American social change in comparative perspective, especially the focus on urban development and social movements, began with a two year Fulbright professorship in the late 1980s at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, where I first met Arno Heller. They were two of the best years of my career, not the least because of the dynamic, supportive, and delightful environment provided by Professor Heller and the other

members of the Amerikastudien department. Part of this essay appeared in an earlier version in Robert Fisher and Howard Karger, *Social Work and Community in A Private World: Getting Out in Public*. Longman, 1997.

² The Greater Houston Partnership was formally created in 1989 when the Houston Chamber of Commerce merged with the Houston World Trade Association and the Houston Economic Development Council.

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Coming of Age in the Shadow of the Vietnam War: Sam Hughes's Quest in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*

Peter Freese

While from the late sixties onwards, hundreds of 'Vietnam novels' have attempted to exorcise the horrors of jungle warfare,¹ since the mid-eighties these combat narratives have been complemented by a new subgenre which no longer focuses on the traumatic experience of soldiers fighting 'in country,' but examines instead the effects of the War upon the home front and depicts, sometimes from a female perspective, both the severe adjustment problems of returned veterans, who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and the complex fates of war widows and children who cope with the death of their husbands and fathers. Two outstanding examples of this new approach are Jane Anne Phillips' *Machine Dreams* (1984) and Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country* (1985), which heralded a changed *Zeitgeist* and reminded their readers that America had not yet come to terms with the harrowing social consequences and the complex moral implications of a questionable engagement. More than any other book, Mason's slim tale confirmed that "in the 1980s Vietnam emerged in [American] culture as a legitimate and compelling topic for discussion, rather than something to be hidden in shame,"² and it helped to make the long suppressed task of healing the collective scars of the Vietnam War a widely discussed national concern³ by using the extremely controversial Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, dedicated only three years before the novel appeared,⁴ as its central symbol.

The tightly organized novel consists of a brief frame which is narrated in the present, and a long inset tale which is told in the past tense. The frame deals with a journey on I-64 to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, undertaken in the summer of 1984 in her second-hand VW Beetle by the puzzled teenager Samantha Hughes, whose father was killed in Vietnam, by her maternal uncle Emmett, who has returned from the war as a deeply traumatized veteran, and by her grandmother, who is still mourning for her lost son. The inset

story deals with Sam's crucial development during that summer in her small southern home town and thus provides the reasons for the trip to Washington. Striving to learn about her father's fate and unable to make Emmett tell her about what happened in Vietnam, she reads all the books she can get about America's engagement in Asia, tries in vain to extract information from other veterans in her town, studies the letters which her father wrote to her mother and the diary which he kept 'in country,' and finally, in utter desperation, spends a lonely night in a dangerous place in the wilderness in order to simulate her father's jungle experience. When Emmett, shaken out of his stupor by her disappearance, finds her, he tells her about an especially gruesome experience that he survived in Vietnam and then arranges for their trip to the Memorial, popularly known as 'The Wall.' This trip provides the cathartic climax of Sam's painful passage from adolescence to womanhood, and thus the novel's organization as a frame tale can be read as forming a structural equivalent of *The Wall* and thereby confirming the completion of Sam's quest through its provision of textual closure.⁵

Although Mason does not employ the strategy of I-narration so typical of the American novel of adolescence from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to *The Catcher in the Rye*, she achieves a moving 'innocent eye'-effect⁶ and allows her readers to empathize with Sam by presenting the novel's action as filtered through the perceptions of a puzzled seventeen-year-old girl, who desperately tries to understand herself and the world around her. By artfully refracting the effects of the Vietnam War upon America at large through the individual consciousness of a fatherless teenager, Mason not only personalizes a general issue, but she also presents Sam's specific predicament as a contemporary variation of such timeless problems of growing up as the quest for a viable identity and the search for a lost father. Thus she can make use of the traditional strategies of the *Bildungsroman*,⁷ the archetypal concept of the 'journey of initiation,'⁸ and even assorted grail motifs,⁹ and thereby charge her deceptively simple tale with additional layers of meaning. But Sam's horizon is limited by the narrow confines of a superficial consumer culture, and this has made conservative critics wonder whether Mason did not unduly restrict her narra-

tive possibilities by choosing Sam's point of view. Conarroe, for example, complained in his otherwise laudatory review that the novel is "less resonant" than it might be because Sam "is no reader,"¹⁰ and Hobson questioned whether Mason could fulfill her "responsibility as a novelist" by using "a point-of-view character to whom all is of nearly equal significance" and who is therefore unable to provide the references needed for understanding and evaluating history.¹¹ Such objections show that *In Country* not only tackles a long tabooed topic but also approaches it with a new, and controversial, method of representation.

When, in 1983, Bill Buford devoted a volume of the British journal *Granta* to *New Writing from America*, he selected fictions by Jane Anne Phillips, Richard Ford, Raymond Carver, Elizabeth Tallent, Frederick Barthelme, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Tobias Wolff and found in them a new and unheard-of type of representation which he named "Dirty Realism" and saw expressed in

unadorned, unfurnished, low-rent tragedies about people who watch day-time television, read cheap romances, or listen to country and western music. They are waitresses in roadside cafés, cashiers in supermarkets, construction workers, secretaries and unemployed cowboys. They play bingo, eat cheeseburgers, hunt deer and stay in cheap hotels. They drink a lot and are often in trouble: for stealing a car, breaking a window, pickpocketing a wallet. They are from Kentucky or Alabama or Oregon, but, mainly, they could just about be from anywhere: drifters in a world cluttered with junk food and the oppressive details of modern consumerism. This is a curious, dirty realism about the belly-side of contemporary life, but it is realism so stylized and particularized – so insistently informed by a discomfiting and sometimes elusive irony – that it makes the more traditional realistic novels [...] seem ornate, even baroque in comparison. [...] These authors are, from one perspective, the youth of the sixties grown up, a generation that, having been raised on weed, whites and protest marches, is now suspicious of heroes, crusades and easy idealism.¹²

Meanwhile Buford's label has not only been varied as 'Shopping Mall Realism,' 'K Mart Realism' or 'Blue Collar Chic,' but has also been defined as an appropriate literary means for depicting "people

who live at the intersection of global postmodern and small-town American cultures" and exist in families "riven by separation, divorce, bereavement and estrangement between the sexes and the generations,"¹³ and has been understood as a response to "the renewed interest in America in masculinity and the role of the father," which, in turn, is "part of the now well-documented phenomenon of 'remasculinization' which emerged as a result of the Vietnam War."¹⁴ Whereas such clarifications have certainly contributed to a better understanding of a new and minimalistic type of realism, a precipitous categorization of Mason as a 'K Mart Realist' and an exclusive focus on her means of evoking the 'low' American culture of shopping malls and fast food chains, TV mass entertainment, and ubiquitous popular music runs the danger of overlooking the accomplished subtexts which underlie the deceptively simple surface of her tales.¹⁵ The fact that she emphatically rejects what she sees as the elitism and hypocrisy of 'high culture' does not mean that her loving depictions of 'ordinary' people lack literary finesse. She has frequently stated that she is fascinated by popular culture because

I think it's very close to people and it reflects what they feel and believe. Certain people denigrate it because it's not high art, but I don't happen to feel that way. I don't want to have an elitist attitude about the culture. It's very real, it means something to a whole lot of people, and I can't ignore that. People have a lot of affection for these images on the screen, names of songs, things that are a familiar part of their lives. If you're writing about people who watch M*A*S*H all the time, as I did, then you've got to know why they watch it, what they feel about it, what place it has in their lives. Otherwise, you're putting the characters down. I'm not so interested in what it means ultimately – whether M*A*S*H is a good show or not, whether television is ruining our lives, whether we're being manipulated by these images. I'm just after the quality of experience in everyday life. Things like that have significance.¹⁶

But her narratives contain carefully wrought and subtly associative subtexts, and these subtexts are of special importance in *In Country*, a book which on closer scrutiny turns out to be more than just a concise portrait of the problems of a working-class teenager from a small southern town, but an accomplished case study in what Krasteva

rightly calls "the construction of a female identity through a rigorous process of deciphering the meaning of widely held national beliefs, mythic concepts and symbolic images that construct both reality and the self."¹⁷

Samantha Hughes aka Sam is "nearly eighteen years old" (7)¹⁸ and, until her trip to Washington as the long awaited chance to be "out to see the world" (7), has never left her home town in "western Kentucky," in which she endures life as if "stranded on an island, far away from civilization" (143). Finding herself in the liminal phase in which every youth must embark upon the initiatory passage from protected adolescence to self-defined maturity, Sam faces an unusually complex task, since she lacks the guidance and protection of a functioning family and finds herself in a highly anomalous position on several counts. She is a war baby and has never seen her father Dwayne, who died in Vietnam in 1966 (66) at the early age of eighteen (58) "right before [she] was born" (78). Her mother Irene has moved to Lexington and left Sam to live with her aimlessly drifting uncle Emmett, a deeply disoriented thirty-five-year-old (6) Vietnam veteran who cannot "adjust" (23) and whose assorted ailments might, to Sam's incessant worry, be the results of his exposure to the carcinogenic Agent Orange.

When, at Sam's high-school graduation, the commencement speaker talks about "keeping the country strong, stressing sacrifice," his patriotic fervor sets Sam "thinking about war" (23) and about her father whom she never knew. Thus, one particularly painful task which she has to wrestle with in the summer of her discontent is the search for her lost father. But this is not her only problem, and when she later remembers that the principal handed her, instead of her diploma, "a blank piece of paper" because "the real diplomas [...] had come too late from the printer" (200), this meaningful little detail metonymically underscores the fact that, having finished school, she must now fill out the blank of both her future and her concept of Vietnam and make up her mind about whether to leave her home town, go

to university, and embark upon an independent career or to stay in Hopewell, take a job, and get married.

A potential model of the first option is her mother Irene, who has made her 'peace' (Greek: *εἰρήνη*) with the past, remarried and followed her successful husband to Lexington, had "a new baby at the age of thirty-seven" (5), and embarked upon a course of belated self-realization by "taking psychology" (160, see 164) at the university. A personification of the second option is Sam's best friend, tellingly named Dawn, who is "much more domestic than Sam" and "a good cook" (40), has a "large bedroom with delicate gold-and-blue flowered wallpaper and a skirt on her dressing table" (39), gets pregnant at eighteen, will marry her boyfriend and stay in Hopewell. She stands for the traditional female role of wife and mother, whereas Irene, who after her abortive teenage marriage briefly became a revolutionary hippie and now goes to university, represents the new freedom of women, which the novel evokes by passing references to Geraldine Ferraro as the first woman to run for the vice-presidency (18f., 220, 232).

Both Irene and Dawn, however, turn out to be inappropriate models for Sam, whose choice of a fitting gender role is not only complicated by the fact that in her attempt at coming to terms with her father's death in Vietnam she is confronted with conflicting notions of masculinity and femininity and discovers frightening relations between warfare and sexuality, but also by the fact that she has to accomplish her individual transition into adulthood in a world of dramatic social changes. Indications of painful clashes between the fixed hierarchical values and mores of a backward southern town with its smug resistance to change on the one hand, and the open and egalitarian standards of a national mass culture with its enjoyable promise of adventure on the other punctuate the novel and make Sam's individual problems representative of her whole generation.

Amusedly remembering that when Emmett brought his Hippie friends to Hopewell, "they created a sensation" (23) in a town in which boys "didn't even wear long hair until the seventies, when it finally became fashionable" (23), and recalling that when Emmett's unruly buddies flew a Vietcong flag from the courthouse tower, no-

body in Hopewell even "recognized that it was a Vietcong flag" (24), Sam is aware that not only in the late sixties, but even in the mid-eighties the older generation still stubbornly adheres to traditional customs and values. And when the disillusioned Vietnam veteran Tom Hudson observes that in Hopewell "everybody's looking backward – to old-timey days. Antiques and Civil War stuff," she wonders "if Hopewell was just now catching up to the Civil War" (79). Aunt Bessie dare not throw her husband's empty bottles away "because she didn't want people to see liquor bottles in her trash" (152), Emmett's father finds his son's inactivity inexcusable and wants him to "get a job like everybody else and stop fooling around" (45), the parents of Sam's boyfriend Lonnie do not get "cable [TV] because of all the R-rated movies" (30), and when Sam tries to talk with Lonnie's mother Martha, who collects "fancy old furniture" (84), about the Vietnam War and Agent Orange, Martha abruptly switches their talk to a "spice rack" (86) she wants to give her daughter-in-law.

The deep generational gap caused by the ongoing social changes in Reagan's America is succinctly expressed by grandfather Hughes, who sadly observes that "country kids are just like the city kids now. They've got more. And they have cars, so they can go running around" (199), and by grandmother Smith, who resignedly remarks that "Hopewell used to be the best place to bring up kids, but now it's not. Young folks don't appreciate the value of a dollar. They think they've got to have it all, right now" (147). And the rift between the staid "country folks" (168) and their dissatisfied children is pathetically represented by grandmother Hughes on their trip to Washington. At "fifty-eight" (231), Mamaw has never left her remote little farm "about twenty miles from Hopewell" (69) "far out on the edge of the county" (112), and therefore she "doesn't know how to act" (15) when away from home. She thinks that "using the Visa card is something like forging checks" (19) and "would have a heart attack if she knew about the pot Sam had in her purse" (9). When she wants Emmett to stop the car, she pretends to have to take a pill since she does not "want [him] to know she had to pee" (5), and when he suggests sharing a motel room, she thinks it inappropriate for Sam and her to "sleep

in the same room with a man" (10) and worries about what her people "back home" (10) will think.

Mamaw considers it "fine when children want to stay where they was brought up" (193) and is certain that her son, who "never took a drink" and "didn't smoke," would have become "a good farmer" (196) and led the same life as his parents, had he returned from Vietnam. Most significantly, however, she meekly accepts the notion of patriotic sacrifice as a God-given duty, as becomes obvious from this dialog with Sam:

"Dwayne was fighting for a cause, and back then people didn't go around protesting. He believed in his country, and he was ready to go over there and fight."

"If you could go back to that time, would you let him go or would you send him to Canada?" Sam asked.

"Oh, Sam," Mamaw said, staring down at the linoleum. "People don't have choices like that." (197)

And when they see Geraldine Ferraro on TV, Mamaw laconically comments: "She won't get elected. Nobody's ready for a woman up there" (18), and thus reveals that she does not at all share her daughter-in-law's conviction that "women can do anything now" (232).

In contrast to their parents, the younger generation, whom mass consumerism and the great equalizer TV have acquainted with the promises of a larger world, no longer accept the traditional role ascriptions, have lost belief in authority, and pine for greater mobility. They love to drive over "to the mall in Paducah," and Dawn's naïve complaint that "this town is dead without a mall" (43, see 74) is a pathetic expression of her generation's vague longings. But Sam, who is aware that since her father's death in 1966 great changes have taken place and recalls her teacher's remark that "the moon landing, the assassinations, Vietnam, and Watergate" are "the biggies in [her] lifetime" (67), has a highly ambiguous attitude towards her home town. On the one hand, she feels imprisoned, "hate[s] the way everybody knew everybody else's business in Hopewell" (122), and "shudders at the idea of growing up on a farm, doing chores, never getting to go to town" (13). But on the other hand, having been accepted by two universities and

thus being able to implement her declaration that "I don't want to stay here" (187), she shies away from leaving Hopewell and announces that she does not "want to go to college that bad" (28). And when she visits her grandparents on their remote farm to get an idea of her father's circumscribed world, she finds everything "small and predictable" (200), but – like Anita Stevens, who says about Hopewell that "people are good here, and it's home" (63) – she also realizes that "her roots were here" (199). What she is certain of, however, is that "something had to change" (190) and that the one thing she must avoid is getting pregnant, which she considers the ultimate entrapment: "it used to be that getting pregnant when you weren't married ruined your life because of the disgrace; now it just ruined your life" (103). Thus, her worst nightmare is having a baby, as Dawn and her mother have, and she recoils from being "stuck in this town, raising a kid. That's not what I want to do with my life" (187).

One indication of Sam's revolt against women's entrapment in domestic spaces and her desire for greater mobility is her regular jogging. First briefly referred to by Emmett (29) and then only mentioned in passing – "Sam went running" (45) – this important motif is later unfolded in detail when it is said that "Sam loved to run because it set her apart from the girls at school who did things in gabby groups, like ducks. When she ran, she felt free, as if she could do anything" (75), and that "when she ran, her head was clear, and everything seemed new, the way it did after a storm" (144). These passages show that Sam's jogging is an attempt at escaping from the tradition-bound world of Hopewell, but both her notion that running sets her "apart from the girls" and the fact that on her runs she is often accosted by aggressive males indicate that here again she gets into conflict with traditional gender roles, since in Hopewell jogging is still considered a male prerogative. Even during her trip to Washington Sam "goes running, down a state road" (11, see 17f.), and the exhilaration she feels when running is, of course, directly related to her fervent wish to own a car – "Boy, I'd give anything for a car" (48) – which for her is not only the cherished symbol of finally achieving the desired adult status, but a means of acquiring mobility, freedom, and self-determination.

When her mother gives her the money to buy a 73 Beetle from Tom Hudson, "owning a car g[ives] her power" (176), and she thinks that "it help[s], having a car" (178). And when she drives Emmett and her grandmother to Washington in "*her* new car" (3), she leaves the stasis of Hopewell behind and enjoys a new independence provided by the freedom of the highway: "She could glide like this all the way across America." (3) Now that she is "on the road, everything seems more real than it has ever been" (7), her interior life journey has finally turned into concrete spatial movement, and "hitting the road" (9) opens fascinating new possibilities: "Everything in America is going on here, on the road. Sam likes the feeling of strangeness. They are at a crossroads: the interstate with traffic headed east and west, and the state road with north-south traffic. She's in limbo, stationed right in the center of this enormous amount of energy" (17).

One reason why Sam hesitates to leave Hopewell is that she feels responsible for Emmett, and another is that, under the given circumstances, she can have the best of both worlds. Living with her unconventional uncle gives her "some kind of independence" (40) and allows her and her motherless friend Dawn, who proudly consider themselves "the baddest girls in Hopewell" (40), many a liberty which conventional gender roles would not permit. When she got pregnant again, her mother had put her sixteen-year-old daughter on "birth-control pills" (43), and since Sam feels safe and Emmett does not care, she can even sleep with her boyfriend at home (40, see 104). She drinks alcohol, she smokes pot (34, 35, 137ff., 142), she has a sexual affair with a Vietnam veteran who could be her father, she cultivates an image of rebelliousness, and she is self-confident enough to care "less and less what people thought" (82). On the one hand, she is touchingly naïve, as when she tells Dawn that a pregnant woman can "mix Drano with pee and find out if it's a boy or a girl" (81), falls prey to a faulty linguistic parallel and thinks that "heartburns" and "heart attacks" might be "related" (32), or muses that the formerly small Japanese and Vietnamese are "not so little anymore [...] since they're eating beef", and wonders "if Americans would get smaller from eating tofu and vegetable plates" (171). But on the other hand, she is a keen observer and a sharp thinker when, listening to the Beatles' "All

You Need Is Love," she realizes "how naïve the words were. Love didn't even solve things for two people, much less the whole world." (111)

Combining girlish naivety with premature adult experience and caught between the constrictions of rural southern culture and the lures of national consumerism, Sam is struggling for an appropriate adult role. Since she can neither accept the traditional gender roles of obedient wife and caring mother as passed on by the older generation nor yet embrace the new forms of independent self-realization as brought about by social changes – "You *have* to go to college, Sam. Women can do anything they want to now, just about" (167, see 232), her mother urges –, Sam concentrates on exploring her father's fate as a soldier and, in the process, encounters equally questionable concepts of masculinity. She is of course unable to approach the reality of Vietnam directly but can only grasp it through its multiple refractions and distortions in the media, and it is only natural that she receives her first images of Vietnam from television. Thus, it was a TV news report of the fall of Saigon which made Vietnam "for the first time [...] an actual place" (51) for Sam when she was "eight or nine" (51), but she soon learns from "a made-for TV movie about the Vietnam War" (69) filmed in Mexico that television cannot provide her with the authentic information she craves. Therefore, she turns to another source and begins to read voraciously all the books she can get hold of in order to come to terms with what she considers "the delayed stress of the Vietnam War" and "her inheritance" (89). However, also her reading, which Emmett ridicules – "Sam's got Nam on the brain. She's been reading a bunch of history books and pestering me." (48) – and Lonnie complains about – "you've been reading too many of them Vietnam books" (185, see 187) – does not help her, because "the books didn't say what it was like to be at war over there. The books didn't even have pictures" (48).¹⁹

Reports about Vietnam cannot satisfy her, Emmett refuses to talk about the war with a woman, and – with Pete's belligerent defense of the war, Jim's rocky marriage, and Tom's impotence – the other veterans, who are also unwilling to answer her questions, present an uncommunicative group of outsiders. Consequently, Sam increasingly

feels "like there's a big conspiracy" (107) against her attempt to break through the wall of amnesia and repression and turns to other means of information. First, she unearths the few letters her father wrote to her mother, only to realize that their pious lies reveal nothing about the real feelings of an innocent eighteen-year-old country boy. Then she deciphers her father's previously unread diary and is both "humiliated and disgusted" (205) by his unquestioned patriotism – "it's all for her [= Irene] and the baby, or else why are we here?" (202) –, by the racist disdain with which he speaks about "a dead gook" (203) rotting away in the jungle, by the coolness with which he records killing his first V.C. (204), and by the discrepancy between Mamaw's idealized image of her son and his macho reality – "he smoked and drank and murdered" (205). And finally, having been repeatedly told that being a woman and not having been "in country" (120, 121, 210) and "humping the boonies" (136, 210) herself, she will never know about Vietnam, and having heard from Pete that the latter phrase with its sexual implications "means going out in some godforsaken wilderness and doing what you have to do to survive" (136), she drives to "the last place in western Kentucky where a person could really face the wild" (208) and spends a night there in order to simulate her father's jungle experience and test her own survival abilities.

During her self-imposed test of courage, Sam must not only learn that "this nature preserve in a protected corner of Kentucky [isn't] like Vietnam at all" (214), but she is also once more painfully reminded of being a woman when, after a frightful night of playing at being a soldier in hostile territory, she hears steps and is afraid of being accosted by a "rapist" (216). Despite the predictable failure of her experiment, however, she undergoes an essential change, which Mason skillfully conveys by using the classical inventory of initiation. During her symbolic *descensus ad inferos* Sam finds herself alone and unprotected in a wilderness in which new life constantly grows from dead matter ("See that dead tree? That's a woodpecker hole up there. But a wood duck will build a nest there." 226) and in which the promise of dawn regularly follows the threat of dusk (216). Since she courageously ventures forth into a hostile and dangerous place "famous for snakes" (211), Sam's passage through spiritual death to rebirth also

contains a crucial movement from innocence to the knowledge of good and evil, because, confronted with an imagined enemy, she, who so far has been unwilling to accept that both her father and Emmett killed enemies in Vietnam, is now ready to commit murder herself. Thus, the moral absolutes of childhood begin to give way to the circumstantial decisions of adulthood, and Sam realizes that she will never get to know her father because the dead are inaccessible.

Since Sam's experiential horizon is circumscribed by the world of small-town America with its shopping malls as standardized icons of mass consumerism, its sensational movies, never-switched-off television sets and violent video games as the purveyors of mendacious fantasies of an exciting dream world, and its ubiquitous pop music as the expression of pent-up energies and the projection of unfulfillable dreams, her quest occurs within a realm in which she cannot measure her conflicting feelings and her half-formed insights against such intellectual yardsticks as religious precepts, philosophical tenets, ideological positions or historical precedents. Therefore, such essential implications of the Vietnam War as its relation to the myth of the frontier and the notion of manifest destiny, as the mutation of 'Reds' from Native Americans to be killed in the American West into Communists to be eradicated in the Asian jungle, or as the missionizing acting-out of Anglo-Saxon racialism in a distant theater of war remain unspoken, but nevertheless form an associative subtext below the surface of a tale which is only seemingly restricted to the perceptions of a working-class teenager from rural Kentucky.

The inset story opens with the statement: "It was the summer of the Michael Jackson *Victory* tour and the Bruce Springsteen *Born in the U.S.A.* tour, neither of which Sam got to go to" (23), and reveals that Sam dates her summer of discontent not by referring to the "presidential campaign" (10) in which Walter Mondale's choice of Geraldine Ferraro for vice-president marks a breakthrough for women, to the burning minority issues which make Sam's neighbor, the conservative Mrs. Biggs, live "in terror that Jesse Jackson might be

elected President" (44), or to such international concerns as "the invasion of Grenada" (88) which ninety per cent of Sam's history class find necessary, but by referring to the triumphantly successful tours of two pop stars. In her world, then, popular music is the dominant cultural expression, and she is influenced as much by the actors and pop singers appearing on her television screen and thundering from her radio and her stereo as by the people with whom she interacts in the 'real' world. Not only does the ontological borderline between what goes on in her house and what happens on her TV screen disappear, as when she, Emmett and Lonnie talk to each other with the Johnny Carson show running, and Emmett's "It's all right" and Johnny Carson's "We'll be right back" (32) blend on the same experiential level. But also the relation between 'reality' and its musical evocation is curiously reversed; when Sam remembers important scenes from her life, these scenes "travel through her mind like a rock-video sequence," and "she wishes she knew the song that goes with it" (237).

Sam and Emmett have developed "the habit of watching M*A*S*H every evening" (24), and episodes from this successful and often rerun TV series punctuate the novel (24f., 27, 33, 36, 42, 45, 50, 54f., 65, 83, 101f., 106f., 117, 135, 164, 171f., 184, 189, 200, 222). M*A*S*H deals with the adventures of the surgeons and nurses of a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in Korea, and its hilariously irreverent sequence of black-comedy episodes pits practical jokes and sexual antics as desperate remedies against the unbearable horror of war. Making the actors and events of M*A*S*H part of their daily lives provides Emmett with a distancing means of confronting his own war memories and offers Sam a sort of oblique approach to what might have happened to her father in Vietnam. For both of them, however, this unusual attempt at autotherapy provides only a partial remedy, because not only does Sam's hope that "watching M*A*S*H so much must be bringing [Emmett's Vietnam memory] out" (36) remain unfulfilled, but she is also sadly aware that the TV series is made-up fiction and that therefore Dr. Sidney Freedman's practice of having his patients "talk out their anxieties" does not work in reality, since "on TV, people always had the words to express their feelings, while in real life hardly anyone ever did. On TV, they had script writers." (45)

Whereas the M*A*S*H characters are regular guests in Sam's house, her real idol is Bruce Springsteen. The career of 'the Boss' not only helps to date the novel's action, but two lines from "Born in the U.S.A." also serve as its motto: "I'm ten years burning down the road / Nowhere to run ain't got nowhere to go." Mason has repeatedly stressed the central role of this song in *In Country* and only recently confirmed that "*Born in the U.S.A.* is sort of a soundtrack to the whole book."²⁰ Springsteen's song is first mentioned in the inset tale when one evening "Lonnie turn[s] on the radio, and Bruce Springsteen yell[s] out, 'I'm a cool rocking Daddy in the U.S.A.!' " (37). Later Sam talks to her girlfriend Dawn about the "new Springsteen album," tells her that "the title song's about a vet," and explains: "In the song, his brother gets killed over there, and then the guy gets in a lot of trouble when he gets back home. He can't get a job, and he ends up in jail. It's a great song." (42) When she thinks that Tom Hudson, with whom she falls in love and whose impotence is a central emblem of the wounded masculinity of the Vietnam veterans, "looks sort of like Bruce Springsteen" (81), Sam betrays her infatuation with 'the Boss,' and when she sees his new performance video *Dancing in the Dark* on TV, this becomes even more obvious:

His jeans were tight as rubber gloves, and he danced like a revved-up sports car about to take off.

"He's awful good," said Emmett.

"He turns me on *high*," said Sam, mesmerized.

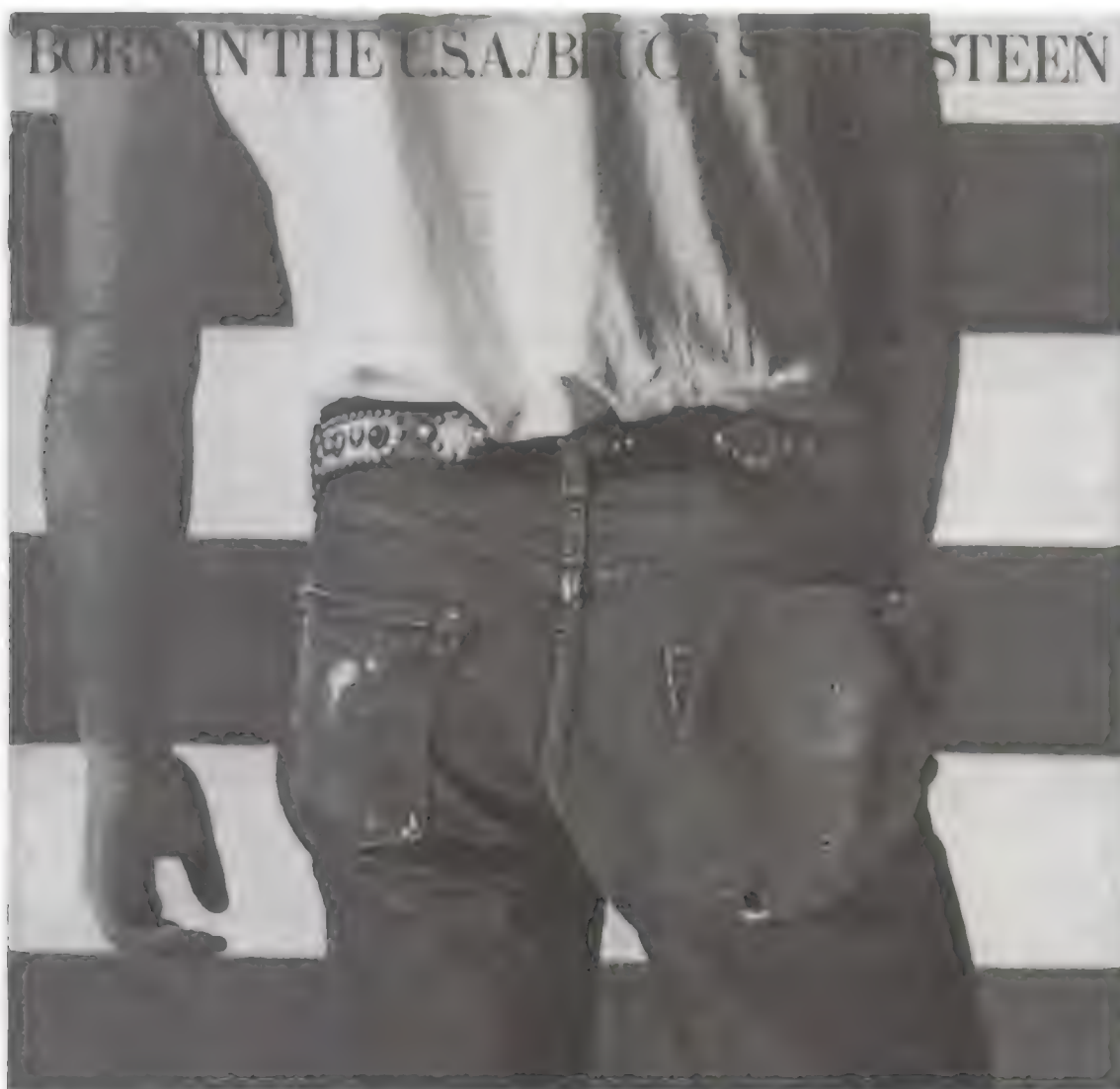
"What do you mean?"

"It's something about the way his jeans fit," Sam said. "You wouldn't understand."

[...] Bruce was still dancing in the dark. Sam loved the part where he picked a girl in the audience to dance with. The girl was in shock that he chose her. (97)

Numerous other references such as "on the radio, the Boss was singing 'Cover Me'" (103), or "she switched back to MTV, hoping the Springsteen video would come on" (140), permeate the book. When Sam "turn[s] the radio on, hoping to hear Bruce Springsteen," and thinks that "somehow there was a secret knowledge in his songs, as

though he knew exactly what she was feeling" (138), she reveals her feeling of congeniality with the singer. And when she fantasizes that "somewhere, out there on the road, in some big city, she would find a Bruce Springsteen concert. And he would pull her out of the front row and dance with her in the dark" (190), she, who otherwise fiercely rejects that role, betrays a teenage girl's romantic dreams about a revered rock idol.



On their trip to Washington, Emmett and Sam listen to Springsteen's "Glory Day" (9), and before arriving at the Memorial

Sam visits a record store, and her "gaze lingers on the *Born in the U.S.A.* album, displayed near the counter. On the cover, Bruce Springsteen is facing the flag, as though studying it, trying to figure out its

meaning. It is such a big flag the stars don't even show in the picture – just red-and-white stripes. [...] Impulsively, Sam buys it [...]." (236)

And when she finally approaches the Vietnam Memorial, "she has the new record album with her" (239). When Sam reads the cover picture as the Boss' attempt at figuring out the meaning of the American flag and, through it, that of America's national identity, and when she understands "Born in the U.S.A." as a sociocritical song about a veteran who cannot adjust after his return from Vietnam, the parallels between the song and her own predicament are immediately obvious. But there seems to be yet another, if only implied, similarity: Sam oscillates between dreaming romantic teenage dreams and rejecting traditional feminine roles and between criticizing America for having betrayed her Vietnam soldiers and loving her for her power and energy; and Springsteen's song seems to contain a similar contradiction between what is clearly a critical evocation of a veteran's disillusionment with the U.S.A. in its stanzas and what sounds like an affirmative patriotism in its sing-along chorus.²¹

Most of the rock music that permeates the book²² comes from the revolutionary sixties and ranges from the albums and individual songs of the Beatles (57, 83, 97, 110f., 120, 139, 236) to The Doors with such songs as "Roadhouse Blues" (10), "Light My Fire" (139) and "The End" from *Apocalypse Now* (114, 215), from The Kinks (57, 120, 158, 172) with "There's a little green man in my head" (217) to The Animals with "The House of the Rising Sun" (121), from The Stones (57, 110) to The Mamas and the Papas (117), and from Janice Joplin and Jimi Hendrix to Jefferson Airplane (57). The numerous references to these bands and their songs provide more than just an acoustical background, and all of them are somehow related to Sam's problems. This can hardly surprise, because the sixties were not only the decade in which Sam's parents enjoyed their brief teenage marriage and her father died 'in country,' but also a time in which an energetic youthful counter-culture made rock music the major means of articulating its revolt against traditional middle-class values. This musical revolt was directed against the very conventions under which Sam is still smarting, and since a major part of it was an enraged protest against the Vietnam War, "all the questions it raised about our

national goals, values, and identity"²³ are exactly the ones which also haunt Sam.

The intricacy of such interrelations can easily be missed, and three exemplary instances might show the surprising functionality of pop music in *In Country*. At the dance organized by the Hopewell veterans, one of them tells Sam that he must have heard the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love" "a hundred times when I was in country" (110), and another says "When you're in country, there's so little connection to the World, but those songs – that was as close as we came to a real connection" and then adds "My favorite song was 'White Rabbit'" (111). Whereas the Beatles' message of love's redeeming power was certainly out of place in the Vietnam jungle, "White Rabbit" is a Jefferson Airplane song about escape from reality by means of psychedelic drugs, and thus the vet's predilection becomes revealingly meaningful. When at Cawood's Pond Sam hears somebody whistle "Suicide Is Painless" (218), she immediately recognizes it is Emmett, but the song carries unspoken further implications. It is the theme song from M*A*S*H, and one must know that the lyrics continue "it brings on many changes" to recognize that it signals Sam's 'change' after her test of courage and her initiatory death and rebirth. During their trip to Washington, Emmett listens to "Burning Down the House" (17) on the car radio, and this 1984 song by the Talking Heads conjures up his obsession with securing the foundations of their house. When he explains the need for his repair work to Sam by saying, "You take a structural weakness. One thing leads to another, and then it all falls apart" (60), this explanation reminds Sam of "the domino theory" (60) used to justify the Vietnam War, whereas Jim's reassuring observation that "I think, it'll hold" (61) obliquely conveys his hope that Emmett has not been fundamentally damaged by his war experience. Rock music, then, is not only Sam's major means of coming to terms with her problems, but also Mason's central instrument for establishing meaningful cross-references.

Almost as important as Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." is a Beatles song which is twice mentioned as "that Beatles record she has been looking for" (12, 17), before it is specified as "a song by the Beatles, but it was not a song she knew. [...] 'You better leave my

kitten all alone,' they were singing. How could the Beatles have a new record, she wondered groggily." (37) Sam unexpectedly hears the song again at the Burger Boy:

It really was the Beatles – a previously unreleased cut from 1964, the D. J. said. Hearing it was eerie, like voices from the grave. Sam sat there dazed, trying to grab the words, while Lonnie and Dawn chattered about the construction work he was doing for his uncle. They didn't notice how far away she was. "You better leave my kitten all alone," the song went. It was great. Hearing it, Sam felt the energy of the sixties, like desire building and exploding. But there was something playful in the song, as if back then were a much better time to be young than now. (51f., see 44f.)

Hesitating to ask her mother, who has every record except this one (57) but does not want to be bothered by the past, Sam hears the song again with "John [...] singing the lead. 'You better leave my kitten all alone,' he sang. 'I told you, big fat bulldog, you better leave her alone.' Sam had to find that record. She wanted to play it for everyone she loved. It was a fresh message from the past, something to go on." (125) But when on her trip to Washington she visits a big record store, she cannot find it and is informed that it "must be a bootleg tape" (236). This song, which Sam cherishes as a message from the past and which confirms her hunch that the sixties were "a much better time to be young than now" (52), is not only thematically relevant because, warning a fat bulldog to leave a tender kitten alone, it speaks out against violence and defends a weak being against a bully, but it is also subtly related to both Emmett's beloved cat Moon Pie and the "bright red ceramic cat with a big grin on its face and a slit in its back for coins" (132) which Sam buys at K Mart because it reminds her of Moon Pie. And when Sam's grandfather Hughes tells her that he had to trim his "cat's ears" (198), when reading about her father's encounter with a putrefying corpse reminds her of "the dead cat she dug up once in Grandma's garden" (205), when a veteran's disgusted wife confides to her that her husband brought some Viet Cong ears home and that now she can no longer wear earrings (123), and when, having passed her test, Sam feels "more like a cat than anything, small and

fragile and very alert to movement" (218), these seemingly unrelated details establish not only a subtle connection with the scene in which Sam has her ears pierced (38ff.), but also with the scene in which Sam, under the influence of pot, embellishes the ceramic cat with pearls and bric-a-brac (137-140) and then presents it to her delighted mother (236, see 172).²⁴

But more important than the motif of the cat is the recurring leitmotif of birds, which is central to the novel's message. When on their trip to Washington they pull over to refill the car, Emmett "is staring off at a bird flying over the Sunoco sign" (4), and it is explained that he "is always watching birds" and looking for "a certain kind of exotic bird" which might stop off in Kentucky on its way to Florida and he wants to see "in the wild" (6). In a conversation with Sam and her boyfriend, Emmett explains that the bird he is "always looking for" is "an egret [...] a bird he used to see in Vietnam" (35). He wants to see it so much because "it was so pretty. It was the prettiest bird I ever saw, all white and long-legged" (36), and seeing another egret will not bring bad Vietnam memories back but, on the contrary, "that was a good memory. The only fucking one. That beautiful bird just going about its business with all that crazy stuff going on around it" (36). When, at another occasion, Emmett "pause[s] to look at something off in the field down by the waterworks, perhaps a bird," Sam muses about his particular ability of getting absorbed in something, which is most obvious in "the way he watched his birds, stalking them and probably imagining a full-feathered bird based on nothing more than a glimpse of wing, a bright patch of crest or throat" (50).

Emmett's obsession with birds is known in Hopewell, and it is no accident that when someone asks Sam whether her uncle has found his bird yet and helpfully suggests that "there's eagles not that far off," Sam insists that "he's not looking for an eagle. [...] He's looking for egrets" (90), thus implying that Emmett is not interested in the eagle as the national emblem of patriotism but in the egret as his individual symbol of beauty and innocence, flight and freedom. And the privacy of his vision is confirmed when Tom Hudson skeptically observes that "Emmett talks about those birds all the time, but out in the jungle [...]"

there weren't any birds" (95). The bird motif is taken up again when Sam repeatedly asks her uncle about his Vietnam experience "besides that bird" (54), recalls that Emmett remembered all the birds he had seen in Vietnam but "didn't know their names until he returned and looked them up in the library" (70), or points out that her uncle "watches birds" and is "always looking for" (63) an egret. At one time Emmett reports that he went out "to look for some little blue herons" (160); when he hears about a wrapping artist in Florida, he is furious about "all the dead birds" (120) which that man's artwork caused; when he observes "the kids driving their cars back and forth from one burger joint to the other" he is reminded of "birds and their courtship dances" (75); and when he pays Anita a compliment, he says "You look like a flamingo" (99, see 101, 109, 114). And the metaphorical implications of his bird-watching are expressed when Sam, high on pot, feels "the way Emmett must feel when he watched birds":

It was as though the most ordinary thing had opened up into a thousand meanings. Emmett had told her of a Zen exercise for controlling the mind. It was a way of grabbing it and bringing it back every time it started to wander. She hadn't been interested at the time, but maybe, she thought now, when Emmett watched birds he was trying to keep his mind from wandering. [...] If he concentrated on something fascinating and thrilling, like birds soaring, the pain of his memories wouldn't come through. His mind would be full of birds. Just birds and no memories. Flight. (139)

It becomes gradually clear that Emmett's fascination with birds has colored off on Sam. Not only does she "want to know about that bird Emmett's looking for" (94), but she also deplores the absence of "any cowbirds" (153) in an otherwise beautiful landscape and is disappointed that her father's "mind was on the fish in Kentucky Lake, not on the birds and fish over there" (180) when he wrote his letters from Vietnam. When she calls her Volkswagen "a good little bird" (6), she links her newly acquired means of mobility with the emblem of flight, and when she compares her little stepsister to "a baby bird waiting for the mother bird to vomit food into its gullet" (156) and feels "the baby's hand [...] like a naked little bird" (162), she obliquely

links bird and birth, as she later openly does when she compares the egret with "the stork bringing her" (211). During her stay at Cawood's Pond she sits quietly on the boardwalk

[...] until the birds flew by unselfconsciously. This was what Emmett did, as he watched and waited, like a spider hiding in a web. A big bird whooshed through the swamp like a reconnaissance chopper, and she caught a glimpse of brown. Then she heard a blue jay squawking. The blue jay was teasing a squirrel. She saw some sparrows. She wanted to know what the big deal was, waiting for birds. It was what hunters did. [...] She saw the egret so often in her mind she almost thought she had really seen it. It was white, like a stork. Maybe her father had seen egrets in Vietnam and thought they were storks. The stork bringing her. (210f.)

And she has a vision in which she sees

Emmett standing silhouetted against the Vietnam sky, standing at the edge of a rice paddy, watching a bird fly away. In the background, working in the fields, were some peasants in bamboo hats. Emmett kept watching the bird fly into the distance, and the *beat-beat-beat* of a helicopter interrupted the scene, moving in slowly on it. The peasants did not look up, and Emmett kept staring, as though the bird had been transformed into the chopper and had returned to take him away. (212)

When the bird she is waiting for does not appear, she thinks of "the poem from school about the man who had to wear a dead albatross around his neck" (215) and coolly rejects the allegorical plight of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* as a male aberration, since "women were practical. They would bury a dead bird when it started to stink" (215).²⁵ Sam fervently "wishe[s] that bird would come. If the bird came, then she would leave" (216). But instead of the bird a desperate Emmett appears, and when he asks what on earth she wanted to accomplish by spending a night in the wilderness, she explains that she needed "to know what it was like out in the jungle by night" (219) and tells him "I wanted to see that bird. That bird you're looking for" (220). This is when a chastened Emmett assumes his 'fatherly' duties,

for the first time tells his niece about a gruesome experience in Vietnam, and then breaks down crying, sounding "like a screech owl" and "the wail of a peacock" (224). Here the bird imagery is still rather negative, but after he has answered Sam's question as to why he is so intent on seeing an egret by explaining that "if you can think about something like birds, you can get outside of yourself, and it doesn't hurt as much" (226), he walks into the woods, and the inset tale ends with him seeming "to float away, above the poison ivy, like a pond skimmer, beautiful in his flight" (226), and once more makes a bird image promise escape from the burden of memories.

After the night at Cawood's Pond it is "as though Emmett had found that bird he wanted" (230) and he and Sam "had changed places" (229), because now the formerly passive man awakes from his lethargy, organizes their trip to the Vietnam Memorial, and decides that Sam will go to university.²⁶ And when they reach the Memorial, bird imagery is again employed, since they experience it "like the wings of an abstract bird" (239) with its "black wing embedded in the soil" (239), Emmett "faces the wall, as though he were watching birds" (242), and "Sam imagines the egret patrolling for ticks on a water buffalo's back, ducking and snaking its head forward, its beak like a punji stick." (242)

When one day Emmett starts wearing "a long, thin Indian-print skirt with elephants and peacocks on it" (26, see 72, 99) and "prances like Boy George, modeling his skirt" (27, see 19, 230), an embarrassed Sam explains her uncle's 'improper' cross-dressing by pointing out that "it's a joke because Klinger wears dresses on M*A*S*H" (27). But Emmett's behavior is more than just a playful imitation of one of his beloved TV heroes, namely, an oblique way of revolting against the machismo that made him go to Vietnam and against the traditional gender roles prescribed by the conservative folk of Hopewell. But it is not only the 'unadjusted' Emmett who refuses to conform to conventional role expectations, is unable to sustain relationships with women, and prefers to cook and do housework to getting a man's job, but also – and even more so – his niece, who resents the

traditional pre-sixties notions of masculinity and femininity. Thus her obsession with the fate of her dead father and the death-dealing violence of war is part of a more inclusive search for a viable identity – during a visit to the courthouse she thinks about the documents stored there and "wishe[s] she had copies of all these official proofs that she was who she was" (96, see 53) –, and her desperate attempt at understanding what happened in Vietnam is intricately entangled with her indecision about adopting male or female traits.

Sam's gender ambiguity is, of course, announced by her very name. In one of his letters from Vietnam her father had suggested that his yet unborn child be called Samuel if it was a boy, which he hoped it to be, or Samantha if it was a girl, a name he thought was taken from "Chronicles" (182), where, however, a disappointed Sam cannot find it (183). His wife followed his suggestion, but predictably Samantha was soon shortened to Sam, and thus Sam bears a name which can be used for both males and females, a fact of which she is well aware when she tells her pregnant girlfriend: "Name it after me. Sam's an all-purpose name. It fits boys and girls both." (82) And her name carries yet another implication, which once more suggests that her experience is a representative American experience and which, too, is mentioned by herself when she "wonder[s] if her mother had named her after Uncle Sam because she was a burden on Uncle Sam, or maybe a consolation prize from Uncle Sam" (167).

Time and again Sam reflects about the questionable results of conventional gender-specific behavior, as when she muses that "boys got cars for graduation, but girls usually had to buy their own cars because they were expected to get married – to guys with cars" (58), as when she thinks that "when boys got together, they got drunk and bragged about sex. Girls talked about boys and clothes. When women got together, they talked about diseases and recipes. Sam didn't know what grown men talked about. Men were a total mystery" (184), or as when she tries to understand why Emmett takes no job as, according to tradition, a man should, by relating his unwillingness to the possibility that a war injury might have made him impotent, like Tom, and by reflecting: "Emmett didn't want a job because men had jobs to support families, and if they couldn't have families, then why bother? It

seemed a simple explanation. Women wanted jobs to prove a point, but men had jobs because of women." (130) When her attempts at learning more about Vietnam from the veterans are time and again thwarted with reference to her gender, and when Emmett puts this rebuke most bluntly by snapping "Women weren't over there. So they can't really understand" (107), Sam becomes increasingly aware of the hidden connections between warfare and sexuality. Thus at one time she thinks that "if men went to war for women, and for unborn generations, then she was going to find out what they went through. Sam didn't think the women or the unborn babies had any say in it. If it were up to women, there wouldn't be any war." But she is intelligent enough to immediately correct herself by adding: "No, that was a naïve thought." (208)

To Sam the traditional distinctions make no sense, and when she, who has advised Dawn to get an abortion, muses that "soldiers murdered babies," she immediately adds: "But women did too. They ripped their own unborn babies out of themselves and flushed them away, squirming and bloody." (215) With such thoughts she deviates significantly from the conventional roles of men as death-dealing soldiers and women as life-giving mothers, and she further extends her mixing of the allegedly distinct spheres of destructive males and nurturing females by comparing Dawn's unplanned pregnancy to "sniper fire" (184) and by thinking that the weeping Emmett at Cawood's Pond "look[s] like an old peasant woman hugging a baby" (226). With such thoughts she metaphorically relates childbearing and warfare, abortion and death on the battlefield, and her conflation of culturally prescribed gender roles is accompanied by troubling images of dead babies that haunt her "morbid imagination" (57).²⁷ Having learnt about Dawn's pregnancy and gone through her first flirt with Tom Hudson, Sam dreams:

She and Tom Hudson had a baby. In the evening, the baby had to be pureed in a food processor and kept in the freezer. It was the color of candied sweet potatoes. In the morning, when it thawed out, it was a baby again. In the dream, this was a happy arrangement, and no questions were asked. But then the dream woke her up, its horror rushing through her. (83)

Observing her mother with her new baby, she jealously thinks that

[t]he baby was like a growth that had come lose [...] – like a scab or a wart – and Irene carried it around with her in fascination, unable to part with it. Monkeys carried dead babies around like that. A friend of Emmett knew a lot of dead-baby jokes, but Sam couldn't remember any she had heard. In Vietnam, mothers had carried their dead babies around with them until they began to rot. (164)

Musing about where she "had seen the Vietnamese woman carrying a dead baby," she remembers that this was many years ago, namely, on "the cover of a *Newsweek* magazine" (169) which her mother took away and burnt in order to spare her daughter the gruesome picture. And the dead-baby image recurs once more when Sam mentions that on the local college radio station dead-baby jokes are told together with quadriplegic jokes (139).

It is the complex interplay between Sam's obsession with her father's fate in Vietnam, changing gender roles in America, and carefully wrought chains of iterative imagery that provides the background against which the final stage of Sam's quest, namely the cathartic visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, unfolds. When the newly formed three-generational family of Mamaw, Emmett and Sam approach the Vietnam Memorial "with apprehension" (237), what they first see is the imposing Washington Monument "ris[ing] up out of the earth, proud and tall" (238). Sam remembers that Tom had once called it "that big white prick" and added "fuck the Washington Monument. Fuck it" (80), and she thinks "a big white prick. She once heard someone say the U.S.A. goes around fucking the world" (238), thereby taking up her bitter comment to Emmett that the Vietnam War was just the petty revenge of an insulted bully: "The least little threat and America's got to put on its cowboy boots and stomp around and show somebody a thing or two." (221) The gender opposition established and incessantly questioned throughout the novel now finds its architectural expression in the stark contrast between an imposing monument visible from everywhere and an unobtrusive monument invisible from a distance, between a heroic white obelisk celebrating the achievement of national unity and a black wall memorializing the

death of soldiers in a war that brought national disunity, between a blatantly phallic emblem of male chauvinism ascending heavenwards and a chthonian "black gash in a hillside" (239) suggestive of female genitalia and descending into the earth.²⁸



The Vietnam Memorial was designed by Maya Ying Ling, a twenty-one-year-old Yale undergraduate of Chinese extraction, who said that she thought of death as "a sharp pain that lessens with time but can never quite heal over. A scar,"²⁹ but that she nevertheless intended the Memorial "to bring out in people the realization of loss and a cathartic healing process."³⁰ When the Hughes' timidly approach it, they experience it in exactly this way. It strikes them as a wound and "a giant grave" (239), but on the metaphorical plane their mournful feeling is immediately contrasted with the by now well-established bird imagery, which evokes the possibility of healing and transcendence. Not only is the Memorial described as a birdlike structure – "The memorial cuts a V in the ground, like the wings of an abstract bird, huge and headless. Overhead, a jet plane angles upward, taking off." (239) – but when they find the panel with the name of Sam's father, Emmett faces the wall "as though he were watching birds" (242),

and Sam "imagines the egret patrolling for ticks on a water buffalo's back" (242).

It is in front of the black granite wall, a cryptic cultural text that strikes Sam as "something for future archaeologists to puzzle over" (244), that she "is just beginning to understand" (240) the problems that have worried her all summer, to move beyond her obsession with war and abortion and with male and female roles towards the essential human problem of mortality and to recognize that, like Bruce Springsteen, she is "Born in the U.S.A." and must join in an act of communal reconciliation. Having so far fiercely rejected pregnancy as an entrapment, she is now gripped by a sudden strong feeling, which is "like a tornado moving in her, something massive and overpowering. It feels like giving birth to this wall" (240). Kinney's comment that "in this revisionary image the daughter gives birth to the father, the future to the past, the living to the dead – but the relationship between destruction and regeneration is no longer horrific,"³¹ might go too far, but Blais is certainly right in observing that Sam's feeling marks a "moment of transcendence that nullifies the simpler categories of male and female, war and peace, evil and good."³²



When the Hughes family find the name of Sam's father, they touch and photograph it, and when Mamaw complains that "all I can see here is my reflection" (244), she unknowingly conveys the crucial insight that the dead remain inaccessible, an insight which Sam had already approached at Cawood's Pond, but which now becomes the certainty that "she will never really know what happened to all these men in the war" (240) and which is the prerequisite for developing a sense of her own self. This is confirmed in the final, and the most charged, scene of the novel, in which a crying Sam suddenly finds her own name – "Sam Alan Hughes" (244) – on the wall. She realizes that this name is not *her* name but her *name*,³³ and when she touches it, feeling "as though all the names in America have been used to decorate this wall" (245), her tentative gesture of reconciliation symbolically erases the differences of age and gender between a dead American soldier from Texas and a living American teenager from Kentucky, makes her move from an individualistic to a communal perspective, and initiates a healing process which shows "that self and other, male and female are not static, absolute, terms but multiple, interactive constructions which can aid as well as hinder imaginative identification."³⁴

Some critics have complained that the novel's ending is both insufficiently prepared for and too ameliorative, that Sam's symbolic joining of the war casualties insinuates an inapposite erasure of difference and that her honorary inclusion in the masculine community unduly simplifies the complexities of gender relations.³⁵ While such criticism may be partly right, it must be stressed that *In Country* does not end with an explanation of Sam's conundrum, but with an image, and that this image is highly ambiguous. The novel's concluding sentence describes Emmett as "sitting there cross-legged in front of the wall, and slowly his face bursts into a smile like flames" (245). Emmett's smile is beatific, and whereas in the context of the iterative bird imagery the reference to flames might conjure up the mythological Phoenix rising triumphantly from its ashes, Emmett's posture is not only reminiscent of the androgynous Buddha whose meditative introspection merges masculine and feminine traits, but can also be related to the Buddhist monks who immolated themselves in protest against

the Vietnam War. Thus, Mason's accomplished little novel, which in 1989 was made into a successful film,³⁶ ends on a note of painfully modified affirmation, and it is the unresolved tension between the promise of reconciliation and the awareness that it is difficult to achieve that makes *In Country* both an accomplished *Bildungsroman* about an adolescent's individual quest for maturity and a narrative study in America's collective wrestling with the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

Notes

¹ See the REMF Bibliography of "Viet Nam War Novels," which is part of the Sixties Project sponsored by Viet Nam Generation Inc. and the Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and lists more than 1,500 novels. http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Bibliographies/REMF [June 2003].

² In Philip Kopper, ed., "Generation of Fellows: Grants to Individuals from the National Endowment for the Arts" (National Endowment for the Arts, October 1983).

³ See Robert M. Slabey, ed., *The United States and Viet Nam from War to Peace: Papers from an Interdisciplinary Conference on Reconciliation* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Co., 1996); and Thomas Myers, "Dispatches from Ghost Country: The Vietnam Veteran in Recent American Fiction," *Genre*, 21, 4 (Winter 1988), 409-428.

⁴ In his 1991 talk "Who's Responsible," W. D. Ehrhart, the well-known 'Vietnam poet,' whom Mason thanks for his "helpful advice" on the copyright page of *In Country*, observed that her "use of the Wall as a literary and cultural symbol was, as far as I know, an original and even prescient choice." [http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Texts/Reviews/Ehrhart In Countr.](http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Texts/Reviews/Ehrhart_In_Countr) [June 2003]

⁵ Yonka Krasteva, "The South and the West in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*," *Southern Literary Journal*, 26, 2 (Spring 1994), 81, suggests such a reading when she argues that "the contents of the novel are 'walled in' by the image of the memorial wall, thus structurally implying a closure."

⁶ See Albert E. Stone, *The Innocent Eye: Childhood and Mark Twain's Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1961).

⁷ See Beverly Foshee, "Mason's *In Country*: The *Bildungsroman* Meets the Vietnam War," *Kentucky English Bulletin*, 46, 1 (Fall 1996), 21, who claims that "Sam's search for the father is a literary and psychological archetype

that unites us with each other as well as with the generations that have come before us. By including this archetypal journey and structuring it around a *Bildungsroman* plot, Mason secures a place for *In Country* in our current and future literary canon."

⁸ See Peter Freese, *Die Initiationsreise: Studien zum jugendlichen Helden im modernen amerikanischen Roman, mit einer exemplarischen Analyse von J. D. Salingers "The Catcher in the Rye"* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1971; rpt., with a preface by Klaus Lubbers, Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998).

⁹ See David Booth, "Sam's Quest, Emmett's Wound: Grail Motifs in Bobbie Ann Mason's Portrait of America After Vietnam," *Southern Literary Journal*, 23, 2 (Spring 1991), 98-109.

¹⁰ Joel Conarroe, "Winning Her Father's War," *New York Times Book Review*, 15 (September 1985), 7.

¹¹ Fred Hobson, *The Southern Writer in the Postmodern World* (Athens and London: U of Georgia P, 1991), 18f.

¹² Bill Buford, "Editorial," in *Dirty Realism: New Writing from America* [= *Granta*, 8] (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), 4 and 5.

¹³ Joanna Price, "Remembering Vietnam: Subjectivity and Mourning in American New Realist Writing," *Journal of American Studies*, 27, 2 (1993), 174.

¹⁴ Linden Peach, "'K Marts and Lost Parents': 'Dirty Realism' in Contemporary American and Irish Fiction," *Critical Survey*, 9, 2 (1997), 67.

¹⁵ Joanna Price, *Understanding Bobbie Ann Mason* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2000), 70, rightly says that "Mason's use of such literary devices as the investment of repeated images with increasing symbolic significance creates textual patterns whose unity and coherence provides the reader with a means of interpreting that exceeds that offered by the signs of consumer culture available to the characters."

¹⁶ Wendy Smith, "Publishers Weekly Interviews Bobbie Ann Mason," *Publishers Weekly*, 30 April 1985, 425.

¹⁷ Yonka Krasteva, 78.

¹⁸ All page numbers in brackets in the text refer to Bobby Ann Mason, *In Country* (New York: Perennial Library, 1986).

¹⁹ The passages quoted and such further references as Sam's remark that "I read about it [= Agent Orange] in a library book" (41); "I've read about the domino theory" (60); "she had been reading about how the United States got involved" (55); "she had read about a lizard in Vietnam" (214); "she tried to remember the descriptions she had read" (214); or she "grabbed one of her

Vietnam books" (107) clearly show that Conarroe's complaint that Sam "is no reader" is totally unjustified.

²⁰ Bobbie Ann Mason, "Poised for Possibility," *Atlantic Unbound*, 19 September 2001. www.theatlantic.com/unbound/interviews/int2001-09-19.htm [June 2003].

²¹ David E. James, "The Vietnam War and American Music," in John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg, eds., *The Vietnam War and American Culture* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991), 248f., discusses how the song seems simultaneously to deplore the neglect of a returning veteran and to praise his being born in the U.S.A., how it was appropriated by both left-wing critics of the establishment and right-wing jingoistic conservatives, how it could be claimed by Reagan in the 1984 presidential campaign, and how it even led to a bumper sticker proclaiming "Bruce: the Rambo of Rock." But Bettina Hofmann, *Ahead of Survival: American Woman Writers Narrate the Vietnam War* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 269, argues that Springsteen meant his song as a critical comment on the discrepancy between dream and reality and argues that while conservatives willfully misunderstood his position, Sam, as a member of the working class, "has no trouble identifying the chorus as an ironic statement because she is familiar with the devices rock music employs."

²² Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr., "Never Stop Rocking: Bobbie Ann Mason and Rock-and-Roll," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 42, 4 (Fall 1989), 5-17, provides detailed information about Mason's intense interest in rock-and-roll from her time as the youthful national president of the fan clubs of the Hilltoppers to her statement in an interview that "writing is my version of rock-and-roll" and her admission that "I identify with Springsteen's songs."

²³ Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr., 14.

²⁴ It is certainly no accident that the ceramic cat is both male – Sam thinks of it as "a punk maharajah" (140) and "a king" (141) – and female – it is decorated with pearls and sequins from Sam's mother – and combines beauty and terror, the past (Irene's jewelry from the sixties) and the present (the fashion of the eighties). – See. Ellen A. Blais, "Gender Issues in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*," *South Atlantic Review*, 56, 2 (May 1991), 118, n5.

²⁵ This is the only passage where 'highbrow' literary associations are used, since besides Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* another classical text is ironically subverted when Sam reflects that "her English teacher who thought Thoreau's retreat to Walden Pond was such a hot idea would probably approve. If it was in a book, there was something to it. But in Sam's opinion Thoreau was paranoid." (210)

²⁶ Matthew C. Stewart, "Realism, Verisimilitude, and the Depiction of Vietnam Veterans in *In Country*," in Philip K. Jason, ed., *Fourteen Landing Zones: Approaches to Vietnam War Literature* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1991), 176 and 177, praises Mason for her almost clinically precise depiction of all the symptoms of PTSD shown by Emmett and his veteran friends, but he severely criticizes her for failing "to finish the story properly," because he finds Emmett's sudden activity and his reaction to the Memorial completely unmotivated and therefore unbelievable. Consequently, he sees the 'realistic' inset story and the 'romantic' frame as insufficiently integrated, and complains that "the stuff of relatively hard-edged realism" is "instantly and carelessly yoked to the sort of pat ending typical of a television movie."

²⁷ When one considers the films and TV serials Sam likes to view – *Humanoids from the Deep* (30) [1980, a violent and bloody story about mutated salmon-like monsters rising from the depth of the ocean and deciding to chop on some bikinied babes]; *Alien* (73) [1979, a grisly rollercoaster of suspense and fear saved from being just another 'slimy monster from outer space' story by a good cast and stunning special effects]; *Apocalypse Now* (114, 215, 217) [1979, a controversial epic vision of the Vietnam War inspired by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, presenting an overall depiction of chaos and primal bloodletting]; *Psycho* (138) [1960, Hitchcock's masterful horror story about violent murder, transvestism, and insanity]; *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* (151) [1965, a wacky combination of western and horror genres]; *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (153f.) [1956, a chilling and genuinely frightening exercise in nightmare dislocation; remake 1978, a ceaselessly inventive, creepy version of the alien-takeover motif]; *Ghostbusters* (154, 185) [1984, a comedy-thriller about Manhattan being overrun by ghosts, with great special effects]; *The Thing* (165) [1982, a frightening story about a team of scientists at a remote Antarctic outpost who discover a buried spaceship with an unwelcome alien survivor still alive, based on John Campbell's "Who Goes There?"] – it can hardly surprise that she has a "morbid imagination." That she is quite aware of that becomes obvious when she wonders "why horror movies had to be remade – maybe because the world was getting scarier all the time" (165).

²⁸ The Vietnam Memorial consists of two walls of polished black granite with their back against the earth, which meet at a 125-degree, 12-minute angle forming a V (which might stand for 'victory,' 'veterans' or 'Vietnam') and taper off at each end, pointing to the Washington and Lincoln monuments and making it an integral part of the recollective architecture of the Mall. On the walls are inscribed the names of the 58,000 soldiers who died

or are missing in action, and they are listed, irrespective of their rank, according to the date of their death. Both a flagpole and a more 'realistic' sculpture of three soldiers were added only later. The Monument, which is a memorial to the Vietnam veterans, not to the Vietnam War, has spawned countless controversial comments. A good introduction is provided by Charles L. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography," *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Summer 1986), 688-719.

²⁹ As quoted in R. Campbell, "An Emotive Place Apart," *American Institute of Architects Journal*, 72 (May 1983), 151.

³⁰ *U.S. News and World Report*, 21 November 1983, 68.

³¹ Katherine Kinney, "'Humping the Boonies': Sex, Comat, and the Female in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*," in Philip K. Jason, ed., *Fourteen Landing Zones: Approaches to Vietnam War Literature* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1991), 48.

³² Ellen A. Blais, 116.

³³ See Barbara T. Ryan, "Decentered Authority in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*," *Critique*, 31, 3 (Spring 1990), 210f.

³⁴ Katherine Kinney, 47.

³⁵ See Diane Johnson, "Southern Comfort," *New York Times Book Review*, 7 November 1985, 16; Matthew C. Steward, 175-177 [see note 28]; James Campbell, "Coming Home: Difference and Reconciliation in Narratives of Return to 'the World,'" in Richard M. Slabey, ed., 198-207; Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989), 62-65.

³⁶ The film was directed by Norman Jewison, with Emily Lloyd as Sam and Bruce Willis as Emmett. For an analysis see Barbara Tapa Lupack, "History as Her-Story: Adapting Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country* to Film," in her monograph *Vision/Revision: Adapting Contemporary American Fiction by Women to Film* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1996), 159-192.

John Haines: The Poet in "Alaska"

James Thompson

"There is no place called Alaska."
John Haines, *Living Off the Country*

John Haines (1924-) is exceptional - as a man and as a writer. He has been one of America's most powerful and enduring poets, yet one of the latest to be appreciated. His poetic development was nurtured neither by a conventional urban bohemia nor by the academic creative-writing industry, which, in his view, has institutionalized American poetry. Rather than these traditional environments, his seminal experience as man and artist - his essential "birth," as both, to use his own term - was his arrival in frontier Alaska; and his real education as person and poet was his long residence there as a homesteader and subsistence trapper.

His independence has become legendary. He has developed a significant body of poetry without requiring either discipleship or sponsorship; moreover, he has never feared to run against the grain of contemporary opinion, either in his poetry or his criticism. His honesty and his outspoken assaults on the lack of "ideas" in American poetry, on its preoccupation with, and sometimes celebration of, the poet's inward life, and on what he sees as the absurd epistemological and ontological assumptions behind so-called postmodern poetry and theory, as well as his restrained, traditional aesthetics - have all understandably made him an outsider, a role inseparable from the totality of his life and identity. He is, moreover, one of that small group of 20th century American writers who have succumbed neither to a sophisticated nihilism, nor to the cult of personality. Rather, Haines is a quiet visionary - one whose vision is essentially religious in a secular age.

In the following discussion I will suggest a few of the central themes in Haines' poetry - especially the role of place, nature, myth, and the Alaska of the mind - and call attention to his own observations on these themes. I do not mean to offer a coherent "philosophy," but rather to suggest a sort of mental geography; Haines warns us that, as with most American poets, his imaginative vision is not a logical con-

struct, and that a poem "has its own imperative. Once set in motion, it takes a life of its own" (FD 220). The focus will fall heavily on his first volume of poetry, *Winter News*, and on other Alaskan inspired poems, but I will also refer to other works, especially his essays.

1.

I came to this place,
a young man green and lonely.

Well quit of the world,
I framed a house of moss and timber,
called it a home,
and sat in the warm evenings
singing to myself as a man sings
when he knows there is no one to hear.

I made my bed under the shadow
of leaves, and awoke
in the first snow of autumn,
filled with silence.
("Poem of the Forgotten" OMD 10)

For over fifteen years at mid-twentieth century, Haines supported an intense life of the mind and art with a primitive cabin, a garden, odd jobs, and an ever-more extensive and arduous trap line in interior Alaska. It was a time of serious if chaotic state building in the then-as-now fabled American North, a place which, even more than California had earlier, marked the true end of the frontier. But for Haines Alaska was as much a state of mind as a physical entity or community - and if a community, then one based paradoxically on the idea of freedom *from* that very social condition, another example of a contradiction deeply rooted in the American psyche.

Haines came to Alaska at a particular time in America's affairs and in his own life. World War II was over; however, its effect on Americans, especially war veterans, was not. He had served in the Navy, seen combat, and subsequently studied art in Washington and New York, but like many of his generation he was ruled by a nagging

sense of dislocation. He questioned his commitment to painting, but was as yet only vaguely drawn to writing. Like others of his generation, both in and out of uniform, he had been forced by the war to reconsider both his own and society's values and goals.

This unsettled post-war turmoil was reinforced by his pre-war experiences; as a child in a military family, his life was continuously interrupted; his Father was a naval officer whose career kept the family constantly on the move between the East and West coasts and Hawaii. Close and lasting personal friendships, or any strong sense of place, had been impossible to achieve; by his own admission he had been a distant child who "held myself apart" (LOC 163). And there had been no stable place - literally and metaphorically - and no community to which he could now return.

Thus in 1947 Haines found his way to central Alaska, took up a homestead claim and built his cabin. The next year he returned to "the lower forty-eight," first to Washington, D.C. and later to New York, where, for two years, he attended the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts. But Alaska had laid its own claim; in 1954 he abandoned urban America, the study of painting and his intellectual circle, and returned to his homestead, where he lived continuously for the next fifteen years, and to which he periodically returned for decades after.

The future poet built his cabin on a hill above the Tanana River near Richardson, Alaska, an address consisting largely of an old roadhouse, located "some seventy miles from Fairbanks." The residents were few and scattered, mostly male and elderly, the survivors of a genuine frontier territory. The communities in Alaska which had emerged earlier in the boom days of the gold rush were classically anarchistic, and while "boom" never signifies a lasting community or a genuine collective identity, it does, however, create a lasting attitude toward stewardship. In years to come he would see Alaska as "a ramshackle copy of something failed in another place" (LOC 30), North America itself, and community as "that shifting and elusive thing" (FD 186). Haines has remained critical of communities - local, national and global - and his "unsettled" life before and during the war has been mirrored by his life since he left Richardson. His choice was, and probably remains, to choose nature over society whenever possible.

The determinably independent men Haines found in their cabins around Richardson became his mentors, and some, his good friends. But judging by the references in his poetry and memoirs, social relations were infrequent and ad hoc; no actual sense of identification in social terms existed beyond occasional cooperation or social contact. The women of two successive marriages moved on. They are seldom and only generally referred to in his poetry or even in his memoirs; when they are mentioned, it is usually in the context of living off the land, not in emotional terms.

Haines would eventually come to identify with his older neighbors, precisely in their roles as independent, autonomous actors in a world where one's primary relationship is with nature itself. Gradually, however, he came to see himself not only as equally self sufficient - living off the land demands that one acquire a wide range of skills and few mistakes are forgiven - but also as a committed poet, and, most importantly, as an artist who felt a seamless relationship between his art and his solitary life in this beautiful but rigorous place. Alaska helped Haines become a poet, because, as he writes, "the physical domain of the country had its counterpart in me." To explore the land - in the deepest sense - was to explore himself; the two explorations "became one in my mind" (SSF 19). Since birth he had been on the move; now he had come not only to a new country but, more important, to "a particular place" where "as a poet I was born" (LOC 4). When he found that specific spot on Richardson Hill above the Tanana, he experienced what some might term an epiphany: "I knew I was home. Something in me identified with that landscape....Such a purity of feeling, of joy and of being in the right place, I have not often felt since" (LOC 5). There are eventual communities in Haines' poetry, of course - personal, local, artistic, national. But even after his continuous Alaskan sojourn ended and he began to spend less and less time at his homestead, it has been the bare, unadorned single person and his relationship with his own humanity, alone in the universe, that continues to influence his vision.

2.

Out there a flickering pathway
 leads to a snowy grave
 where something in me
 has always wanted to lie.

Then let it take me,
 a lost, shivering animal -
 eyelids shut fast,
 hands folded,
 wrapped in a stillness made of
 ice and starlit tears.
 ("The Visitor" OMD 25)

Although he attempted poetry soon after establishing himself in the North, his first collection, *Winter News*, was not published until 1966, when he was already forty-two years old. His development as a poet was as autonomous as his life on the land; it was and would continue to be slow, patient, and largely unaffected by the literary bias of America's cultural elite. The work of his early poetic maturity is vivid, yet quiet; full of larger reverberations, yet frugal; "realistic," yet beneath the realistic elements, often mysterious. He was building his poetry as he was building his physical life, and the similarity to Thoreau in the Walden years is inescapable. His art was "homemade," - to use his own description - in the sense that we use the term to describe some of the best American Literature, for example Emily Dickinson's remarkable poetry, like that of Haines, written without concern for contemporary literary taste. But despite the elemental nature of his circumstances and his deep sense of the significance of his relationship to nature, Haines was no primitive; Western culture (though not necessarily American culture), was of fundamental importance to him. This wild place and "the unaging monuments of intellect" - nature *and* culture - created the double matrix of his intellectual, poetic and spiritual development.

Winter News offers the reader a vivid cluster of stark references to a world new to Haines: winter, snow, darkness, wilderness, animals, death and, above all, solitude. Although to a significant degree a

modern heir of the great Romantics, Haines is yet no Emersonian Transcendentalist. All of these elements are acknowledged in their severity; neither is there anything of the lower case romantic sentimentalist here. He tells us in his beautifully written memoir, *The Stars, the Snow, the Fire* (1989), that he came to recognize, behind the stark beauty of Alaska, that "a drowsy, half-wakeful menace waits for us in the quietness of this world"; he believed that there was always "something that did not care if I lived or died" (SSF 104). This reminds one of the issue raised by Aldous Huxley in his witty essay, "Wordsworth in the Tropics"; Huxley argued that the great "nature" poet had failed to grasp what Tennyson would later describe as "nature red in tooth and claw." Like Robert Frost, but more importantly like Robinson Jeffers - a poet of particular interest and affinity to Haines - there is no pathetic fallacy in his vision. The very nature of his Alaskan livelihood meant daily exposure to claws, blood and death. Concerning nature's attention to man's plight, he would agree with Frost that "One had to be versed in country things / Not to believe the phoebes wept." For a stern skeptic like Frost, the question remaining after the failure of Transcendentalism was "what to make of a diminished thing." ("The Oven Bird") For Robinson Jeffers, however, that issue was mute; his "inhumanism" celebrates the permanence of nature, not the permanence of mankind. Haines likes to think of human history as the cycles of primitive life, the perennial activities of birth, life and death of peoples who lived in nature, not off it, a subject to which I will return. But facing the desecration of so much of the world's surface, he can also say, in the fashion of Jeffers, that "in my most pessimistic moods I sometimes think that what we really need is another Black Death" (LOC 131).

However, in this first volume - which clearly establishes his poetic vision and thus influences much of his post-Alaskan poetry - the continuous menace, hardship and isolation are treated with a kind of love springing from acceptance, an acceptance not fatalistic but rather resulting from his slow realization of his place in the specific nature of central Alaska and, more importantly, in the cosmos itself. As late as in the preface to his 1993 collected poems, Haines quotes Wordsworth's line from "Tintern Abbey" about the poet's capacity to "see

into the life of things." If the writers and intellectuals of his generation found their answers in French Existentialism, he did not; repeatedly in his poetry one recognizes a spirituality and sense of continuity that constitute a religious vision. Nor did Haines see himself in that other nineteenth century romantic image: "*I am not an Indian*," he said, and when asked what influence Alaskan native cultures had had on his writing, he said none - that his influences had been mainly European (LOC 149).

3.

"Will we ever again be at home / on earth?
The green circle is broken."
(Haines "Victoria" OMD 132)

The greatest poverty is not to live / in a physical world."
(Wallace Stevens, "Esthetique Du Mal")

Before Haines eventually became widely recognized as one of the significant poets of his generation, he had long been pigeonholed: as an Alaskan writer, as a "regionalist," as a "nature poet." His name and his poetry have been inevitably linked to his years of subsistence living in the last great American wild space - a life apparently fascinating to urban critics - and he has more recently been enthusiastically taken up by ecocritics. None of the labels are totally invalid; Alaska has meant to him what New England meant to Frost, and his relationship with nature has profoundly shaped his sensibility in a way reminiscent of Wordsworth. But allowed to stand alone, these labels are as reductive as they were for Frost and Wordsworth; they ignore the range of Haines' work and the mythic nature of his Alaskan experience and the poetry it inspired.

Thus if Richardson Hill was his "state of grace" (LOC 52), his Eden, then his Fall was inevitable. He would be driven out, and the prevailing severity and markedly elegiac tone of much subsequent work would result from his forced confrontation with a world where autonomy of self and harmony with place were impossible to sustain. He knew that in his "displacement from the wilderness," he would "never again see the world" as he had from above the Tanana (LOC

41). A realist, he also knew that parts of Alaska had been ravaged by the gold rush long before he arrived, and he had often discovered the residue of that ill-treatment in the mechanical debris rusting away in the underbrush. Later he would recognize the Alaskan pipeline as simply an extension of the damage wrought earlier, and Alaska as a metaphor for North America and the failure of its original promise. Wordsworth claimed that "Nature never betrayed the heart that loved her"; the impact of man's betrayal of nature would remain beneath the surface of everything Haines would subsequently write.

More important to the interpretation of his Alaskan poetry, this sense of a personal fall enables us to see his work, not simply as a simple reportorial response to life in the wild, but as essentially mythopoeic: the reality *and* the dream. Mythopoesis had been an unconscious element in his compulsion to write poetry from the outset; the life of a bare, unaccommodated man, naked and open to the universe, demanded a larger response from one of his sensibility. Thus after Richardson, Haines was forced by circumstance and disposition to understand "place" in a new way - as more "internalized" and less "exclusively geographical" (LOC 38). He speculated that "the real frontier is now somewhere else - within us," perhaps (LOC 150). His Alaska is complex and evolving - on one hand, a literal, physical "homeland," a very specific place, on the other "part myth, and part wish" (LOC 151), a presence mediated by the imagination and art. Alaska, and the North in general, evoke a kind of "primordial memory" (*Ibid* 151):

It is as if an older consciousness of nature,
Overgrown by education, slowly begins
to reassert itself - the barriers come down, and
the lines between human and animal, between
yourself and the forest world, become indistinct.
Something like the ancient religious dread comes
back to claim its territory (LOC 140).

Nature and culture, wilderness and myth: both provide the source and access to religious experience, each informing the other.

Thus for Haines Alaska came to mean not so much the State, the developing social unit, but rather the possibility of regaining the knowledge of "our lives as part of some ancient human activity," measured not mechanically nor in "wage hours," but by the "immense stations called Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter" (LOC 27). His own Alaskan life "seemed the embodiment of an old story," and he knew that "there is the dream journey and the actual life" (LOC 24, 27). It is art - "the old story" - that links the two. He came to believe that "Alaska needs a literature as a matter of practical necessity, of self identification." But he also believes that it should be a "literature so distinctive that it belongs unmistakably to a certain place yet speaks for all places. It ought to be the task of the Alaskan writer to understand this" (LOC 20). Of course such writers may eventually arise. However, Haines' hope that "it may now and then be possible to recover, in a new land, something of that first morning of existence, when we looked at the world and saw, without motives, how beautiful it is" (LOC 21), was largely doomed before he arrived; the very expression is perhaps an unconscious echo of the famous elegiac ending of *The Great Gatsby*. Haines *had* lived on the land "without motives," but Alaskan politicians and the great oil companies did have - and clearly *do* have - very specific motives. In his heart Haines recognized the critical mandate: "[W]e face the wilderness once more in the classic American manner, by turns destroying and sentimentalizing it." This tendency to turn nature into a strip mine or a theme park results from "our ruinous and self-defeating real-estate mentality in respect to the earth" (LOC 37). By this time he was a confirmed, if home grown, socialist, and he believed that both capitalism and human nature were the primary forces behind the despoiling of the wilderness. Much of his subsequent poetry is vigorously political.

In "Leaving Alaska" (1991) Haines laments that now he has to climb a guardrail and cross the highway in order to see the Tanana, where "once, years ago, I looked directly from the house to see five wolves trotting downriver on the spring ice" (FD 211). He knows that having "once passed out of that mythical, god-haunted mind in nature, we cannot go back by an act of will" (LOC 55). Nature had given Haines his poetry, and its destruction provided one of the forces that

continue to perpetuate it. The transition from mythopoeic poet to social critic, then to an angry Jeremiah, is part of his artistic trajectory, although the transition is only partial. In the cabin above the Tanana it was possible to ignore much of the distant Cold War; removal to contiguous America forced him to confront difficult social and political issues. He would find it "hard to stay awake inside America, hard to stay alive. The soul feels empty there" (LOC 113). In poetry published during the Vietnam War and the years following, especially in his 1971 volume, *The Stone Harp*, the bitterness is stark, and on occasion anger betrays craft.

His most recent volume of poetry, *For The Century's End* (2001), continues this preoccupation, and is marked by a paradoxical combination of outrage and acceptance. His own sense of loss fuses with a belief that the destruction of nature is one with the bankruptcy of America's values in virtually all aspects. Nor does he view this failure as simply contemporary; rather, he sees the weakness as endemic. From "all our wigged colonials, / our Franklins, conspiring with their strongbox keys /and profitable lightning," from the great "folly" that "follows in the wake of fathers,"

From their deliberate violence
we come to our own lamed
misrule, its slick banality
and crime without passion.
("In the House of Wax," FCE 27, 28)

Even the eyes of the "sold and trodden," those in our society crushed by economic and social power, acquire "the same feral glitter / of their late masters" when given the chance to move up (*Ibid* 32). In "The American Dream," a ghostly actor suggests that "the meaning of our play, / its theme and blunted purpose," are almost forgotten (FCE 42). Consequently, in "this country / of diminishing returns....earth is only a name" with "nothing but the memory of trees" ("Star Photo" FCE 15).

His consolation - not desired but accepted - would have been endorsed by Jeffers; humanity may not endure but nature will, "neither the earth nor the cosmos requires our presence in order to fulfill itself"

(FD 212). Earlier he had described this belief in brutal terms: if the history of mankind "should come to nothing...there is one great consolation before us. It is extreme, but says that in spite of all we have done or can do, the wilderness is here, ready to spring back into place" (LOC 60), an idea in keeping with his startling comment cited earlier about the potential need for a return of the Plague. He assumes that "the physical universe *is* indifferent to us, as a species and as individuals," but he does not accept that such indifference should contradict "the religious feelings we also have" (FD 229).

Haines has said, however, that in fact he does not "believe in the extinction of life, not even of human life, no matter what...my own fears can sometimes project" (FD 154) In "Poem For the End of the Century," he describes himself as "the dreamer who remains / when all the dreams are gone, / scattered by the millennial winds," one who knows "the solar clock hand stopped," and has witnessed the "confusion and fury on the street." At the poem's end, however, he can say "once more to himself / on this calm evening of earth:

Awake! The stars are out,
mist is on the water,
and tomorrow the sun will return.
(FCE 1)

It might, of course, return without us - the century's end may be our own; but if so, there is left the honest confrontation, like that with one's personal death:

To think to the end of one's life,
think it through and go beyond -
go back to the beginning, to find
one's way into that place where
all was uncertain expectation[,]

knowing that: "It was all there in that moment....All that was and would be" ("To the End" FCE 82). Such passages suggest that, despite the characteristic elegiac tone, we are listening to one who has, for himself, answered Frost's question of "what to make of a diminished

thing"; nature will survive and we can, if need be, summon the will to contemplate our personal and collective end. At the least it is a stoic's conclusion, no doubt utterly unacceptable to those whose solipsistic self-regard acts as a defense against such a realization. The overwhelming changes brought to Alaska, and the social forces that have caused them, bring him almost to the point of hopelessness, but he stops short of becoming a prophet of pure doom "if only because it is essential to avoid despair" (*Ibid* 213), but also because of his larger sense of meaning. Were physical nature his only love, he would not have been able to resist that despair; nature, as for Emerson and the great Romantics, is a "link with divinity" (FD 190), and the poetry it generates must be more than the "subjective states of mind" of a "baffled personality intent on imposing itself on the reader" (FD 123-24). He believes that modern poets have lost the "vital and affectionate closeness to things, as from a deep historical past," which Wordsworth and Hardy, Keats and Lawrence, still experienced (FD 123). In fact, Haines' consolation is religious and mythic.

4.

One outstanding characteristic of poetry in the past decade or more has been its excessive concern with self and with private life....subjective exclamation has largely replaced insight. (LOC 100-01)

It should be apparent from passages such as the above that, despite the shaping power of Northern isolation and long private contemplation, as well as profound skepticism, Haines' poetry differs from much modern American poetry in an important regard; long isolation and self-dialogue notwithstanding, it is nearly devoid of the narcissism so characteristic of poetry after, say, 1960. Haines has acknowledged that "many of my poems have concerned an 'I' - me, or something designated as me" (LOC 134), and that he, too, has been occasionally guilty of self-preoccupation. But in his typical avoidance of egoistic concern, as well as the social self, Haines' almost always moves his poetry away from ego and opens it to the world: to nature, culture, history, and myth.

It is clear that, for Haines, as for the major Romantics before him, "life, art and religion are one" (FD 122). And these elements of culture are not opposed to nature but a way to nature - "it is not a matter of one or the other, but both, of nature *and* culture" (FD 130), each informing the other. Thus Haines' imaginative activity in Alaska involved simultaneously reading the book of nature and the books of culture - "the great books we have been reading, and writing, from the beginning" (FD 127). He believed then and does now that the modern, self-obsessed poet no longer does such reading or such listening; yet in order to "see into the life of things" one must be, metaphorically, "laid asleep in mind and body," as Wordsworth said in "Tintern Abbey." Especially in Haines' early poetry we find numerous images of such realization; for example, Autumn is a "book" to be read, "open on the table," and

There are silences so deep
 you can hear
 the journeys of the soul,
 enormous footsteps
 downward in a freezing earth.
 ("Listening in October" OMD 34)

To write serious poetry one must develop a "listening quality. In order to hear anything at all we must silence the world around us and its agitation within us. A few things in one's life will become clear" (LOC 122). The life that becomes clear, however, is not the life of emotional egoism, but rather a life of powerful correspondence. These poems are as much concerned with inner landscape as with outer, with his inner weather as much as that of the world around him - or rather with the connection between the two. Thus "the self- / contained traveler" in "Poem For a Cold Journey" "could hear / within myself the snow / that was coming" (OMD 28-29). The correspondence between inner and outer leads his poetry away from unqualified realism to rich metaphor and symbolism (and often something very like surrealism), from concrete experience to mythic significance.

The eternal task of the artist and the poet, the historian and the scholar...is to find the means to reconcile what are two separate and yet inseparable histories, Nature and Culture. To the extent we can do this, the "world" makes sense to us and can be lived in." (FD 127).

Haines is not a traditional mystic, although he does recognize throughout his poetry and prose that "mystery always / towering in the distance" just beyond our rational grasp ("To Live Among Children" OMD 88). Whether or not humanity itself will survive, our relationship with the cosmos is *not* that of the nameless and unrecorded, simply a part of the great flux of life which leaves behind no trace. Rather we have two or even three histories and therefore multiple identities. "The theme of my poetry," he has argued, "might be defined as....a dialogue between what is natural and what is achieved and necessary as culture" (LOC 153). "There is the dream journey and the actual life," he writes, and each possesses "a kind of radiance, a very old and deep assurance that life has continuity and meaning....It is the journey resolved into one endless present" (LOC 27-28).

This argument for the continuity of human identity may seem paradoxical, given his sometimes doubt as to the permanence of human existence; however, it is in keeping with what he has read in the books of nature and culture. Our collective past is manifested in the evolution of our culture, thought, art and traditions. Paleolithic art demonstrates a deep, prehistoric record left by those who went before us much earlier, an idea Haines explores in "The Eye In the Rock." The eye is part of an Indian face, painted there to see "this light / that has not changed, / the air we have always known..."(OMD 147). In "The Traveler," he mingles reality and myth seamlessly. This poem moves from the speaker's memory of "an Eskimo / walking one evening / on the road to Fairbanks," to a vision of ancient peoples "camped on the bank / of a river" butchering game after the hunt, "a red memory against whiteness," to a fusion of the present and deep past in the "footsteps of a man walking alone / on the frozen road to Asia" (OMD 26), an image recapitulating the great intercontinental migration.

For Haines, myth embraces history and pre-history, offering both the imaginative truth on which we have always drawn, and the ever reinvented cosmic syntax that enables us - sometimes - to be at home in the world. A humanist in this post-humanist age, Haines believes that poetry remains valuable because, at least occasionally, it can "recall to us the original meaning of things, and restore, if only for a moment, something of the lost vitality in our connection to the world" FD 228). This insight is the legacy of meditation in isolation on long Alaskan nights in a snow-bound cabin overlooking the Tanana River. A patient reading of this patient writer provides a similar kind of meaning, a meaning especially precious at a time when, indeed, many critics and some writers argue against any meaning in literature at all.

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Summer in the Air: Emma Dunham Kelley's *Four Girls at Cottage City* and Dorothy West's *The Wedding*

Hanna Wallinger

Many African American narratives are associated with specific places, towns, and regions. There are numerous descriptions of the Southern plantation with the big house and the slave quarters; often the North is envisioned as the promised land of freedom; Harlem, Boston, Chicago, or New Orleans are only a few of the best-known urban settings invested with special significance. Some places are used as symbolic background to the plots, and some of them provide a very specific and true-to-life social and cultural setting for the characters. In many cases, certain writers are associated with specific regions: Zora Neale Hurston and Eatonville, Florida; Charles W. Chesnutt and Wilmington, North Carolina; Richard Wright and Chicago; Alice Walker and Mississippi; Walter Mosley and South Central, the minority area of Los Angeles. Often a historical setting, such as Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, becomes a ritual ground that serves as a metaphor, in this case of the myth of racial uplift.¹

One region that is usually not linked with African American narratives is Martha's Vineyard, the vacation resort off the coast of Massachusetts, renowned for its high-society claim with cottages owned by presidents and people of celebrity.² Apart from its fame as a holiday place, the island has had a history in New England Methodism since the time when an evangelist named Jesse Lee established meetings in 1795. All through the nineteenth century Methodist camp meetings drew a large number of families, who started to build cottages to accommodate their friends and members of the family. In the course of time, prosperous summer settlements developed, one of them being Oak Bluffs, the city of residence of Dorothy West. African American vacationers from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington started to come in the late nineteenth century and began what West calls "a black colony" ("Legend" 240): "They made a massive imprint. They bought the big neglected houses, and other long-empty cottages, lifted their sagging facades, put in new plumbing and

wiring, scrubbed and polished and painted" ("Legend" 241). They formed a summer society with their own rules and regulations.³

The focus of this paper will be the island of Martha's Vineyard as a place of African American vacationing in two texts: Emma Dunham Kelley's novel *Four Girls at Cottage City*, published in 1895, and Dorothy West's novel *The Wedding* of 1995. This focus on a narrow geographic location allows a diachronic comparative approach, which links a little-known writer at the end of the nineteenth century with a more famous writer of the twentieth century. In both novels identity, the "search for self and its relationship to social contexts and realities" (Alexander 379) is closely linked with place. Place, in turn, contributes to a definition of gender, class, and race, so that identity can be regarded as a function of place, as Sandra Carlton Alexander argues when she discusses the early slave narratives in which she observes "a clear and inextricable relationship between the environment into which fate had placed them [the slaves] and their own definition of [...] self" (379).

Emma Dunham Kelley's novel *Four Girls at Cottage City* opens with four lovely young girls setting out to spend their summer vacation at Cottage City on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. The summer resort promises them band concerts, walks on the beach, pleasant company and a great occasion to chat and have fun. A few weeks of holiday at some summer resort in a rented room in a cottage, at a more expensive hotel or in one's own cottage was a growingly familiar pastime for late nineteenth and early twentieth century African Americans of the middle and burgeoning upper classes. Charles W. Chesnutt and his family spent their 1897 summer holiday, for example, at Linwood Park, Vermilion, Ohio, on Lake Erie. Chesnutt wrote about it: "There the children spent hours every day in the lake or on the beach. Ned [his son] loved to swim, but the girls found it difficult. They all learned to row in the Vermilion River. They enjoyed the fun and excitement of bonfires on the beach at night with the other young people of the resort, while some adult told thrilling stories to the group" (79). In 1910, Helen Chesnutt, the writer's daughter, records her family's holiday at Sea Isle City, New Jersey. Her father sends her a letter in which he describes this vacation: "We spent a

delightful month by the seashore, and I find myself at the end of it rejuvenated and ready for my fall business" (238). Writing in 1904 for the *Voice of the Negro* about the colored society of Washington, D.C., Mary Church Terrell says about her friends' summer holidays:

Some of those seen at the leading social functions during the winter spend a portion of the summer at the sea shore, in the mountains or at some quiet country resort. There is a charming spot on the Chesapeake Bay, which has been converted into a summer resort by one of the most progressive and useful colored men in Washington. Here some of the flower of the social flock of Washington and neighboring cities take their summer outing in pretty little cottages which they themselves own. Boating, fishing and crabbing are the order of the day, together with an occasional dance, [...] At Cape May, or Atlantic City or Newport or Saratoga some of the social contingent are sure to while away a portion of the summer. (155f.)

In his study *Aristocrats of Color*, Willard B. Gatewood lists as favorite vacation resorts Saratoga Springs in New York, Newport, Atlantic City, Cape May, Sea Isle, Harper's Ferry and Silcott Springs, Highland Beach, West Michigan Resort or Idlewild (see 200f.). Gatewood also points out that these summer resorts fulfilled the important function of strengthening class bonds: "Summering together provided opportunities for aristocrats of color from throughout the nation to make new acquaintances and renew old ones, all among persons of 'co-equal' social status. Children and sometimes grandchildren of the old upper-class families who played together at the spas or on the seashores established relationships that bound them for life and perpetuated the genteel tradition bequeathed by their elders" (202). Evidence of this spirit is distinctively found in Dorothy West's novel.

The four girls in Kelley's novel, though, certainly do not belong to the upper class, they are working girls of good education and very decent behavior and have to budget their finances carefully. Thus *Four Girls* is an early record of vacation-taking of the growing African American middle class. In 1926, Alice Dunbar-Nelson calls the last two weeks in August "Sacred fortnight! Sacred to the working girl and working man everywhere, and sacrosanct to the Man and Brother

and Woman and Sister" (*Works*, 2, 189). She recalls the time when "the dear girls saved all winter, and slaved at the sewing machine all summer making innumerable dresses with innumerable frills to wear 'down at the shore'" (189). After a merry time with dances, dressing up, spending their days at the beaches in frivolous bathing suits, they would return to work with little money but fond memories. In a later newspaper article of 1929, Dunbar-Nelson advises her readers to avoid the masses, for example at Highland Beach near Washington, and go there early in July, instead of in August. What Dunbar-Nelson talks about most is the enjoyment of fresh air, bathing, good food, and making new acquaintances or meeting old friends (see *Works*, 2, 271-5).

In *Four Girls*, Jessie and Garnet Dare, Allie Hunt, and Vera Earle choose Martha's Vineyard because of its proximity to their home-town of Boston and because the Dare girls had been to Cottage City before. "Our" girls, as the intrusive narrator lovingly names them, are excited about the travelling. They are appropriately bundled with suitcases, one of them guards the purse that stores their small amount of money, and they discuss the books they plan to read. In detail, the readers learn about the train and the boat ride and their chance encounter with Mr. Fred Travers, a cousin of the Dare sisters, and his friend Erfort Richards. This account is followed by a description of their search for an appropriate boarding house, details of the interior of the room and the house, of the food they eat and the clothes they have taken along. There are long discussions about what to read and why they should read certain texts. The narrator alternates descriptive passages with passages of very lively dialogue and thus the reader is drawn into and made to feel empathy for the thoughts and activities of the girls.

As a novel set at a famous sea resort with the protagonists taking a vacation there, the readers might expect a story about typical vacation activities. This expectation is only partly fulfilled. The girls attend the band concerts, they go out for dinner, they take walks on the beach, but they do not bathe in the sea and even disapprove of watching the bathers. Most of the action takes place indoors. In contrast to *Megda* (1891), Kelley's first novel, the mood is genial and lively, but

it is not as carefree as one would expect. In *Megda*, another set of three girl friends decides on a plan of action for their week of pleasure: they intend to get up at sunrise and take a long and pleasant walk along the shore; then two of them would prepare breakfast, while the third girl would go to morning prayer; then they make their beds and set the room in order, and sit on the porch with some reading or crocheting; they would go to the beach and watch the bathers and have dinner and a siesta; they would promenade between three and four in the afternoon and be at the beach again at sunset; after supper they would go to the band concert and retire for the night at ten o'clock (see 288f.). Most of the activities take place outside. The difference between these two novels lies in the function of the vacation setting. In *Megda* the holiday period covers only one part of the plot and the major conflict arises out of the everyday lives of the characters; in *Four Girls*, Cottage City is the only setting, and a significant one.

There have to be other reasons why Kelley decided to use Cottage City as the setting of her novel. *Four Girls* is a novel about spiritual salvation set at a place that is associated with religion. Martha's Vineyard has been chosen because of its long history of evangelization at the Methodist camp ground. Religious terminology occurs frequently in the text. The girls walk up a pair of "Christian stairs" (32) to their room. Their boarding house is situated right opposite the tabernacle (41). "Mother," their hostess, coaches them into singing hymns with her and "Grandpa" every morning and earnestly inquires into the state of their religious salvation. Although from a modern point of view, the girls are well-behaved, very earnest, and very thoughtful young women, the novel sets them in a situation in which sacrifice and religious dedication are demanded. They meet a woman named Charlotte Hood, who tells them her sad life story. After her three children, her husband, her mother, and her sister had died, Mrs. Hood fell into deep despair doubting the presence and guiding influence of God. She was converted into a true believer after a dream that figured a highly human, even erotic savior who promised eternal salvation if the sinner renounced her evil ways. Hood's story is reminiscent of the tales of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, which Hood names as one of the books she is familiar with (see 299), and is set in the Holiness

Movement of 1835 to the 1930s. In her introduction to three African American spiritual narratives by women, Sue E. Houchins writes about the essentially Methodist principle of "sanctification," in which a soul pilgrimages towards Christian perfection or evolves in accordance with a prescribed order of salvation. After a period of self-doubt, a person is graced with the knowledge that all sins are forgiven and she or he is justified before God and will enter into God's glorification (see xxiv). The genre of spiritual narratives documents, as William Andrews puts it, "the soul's journey not only from damnation to salvation but also to a realization of one's true place and destiny in the divine scheme of things" (10).

Charlotte Hood's story takes up a large portion of the novel. The girls are drawn to her sad fate, especially because her one remaining son suffers badly from spinal problems and needs a very expensive operation to get well. The girls and the two gentlemen, Fred and Erfort, eventually decide to spend some part of their earnings to help him get this operation. In the true spirit of love, Mrs. Hood motivates the girls and the two young men through her example and instills in them deep and true emotions that are felt to be superior to recreational activities. On a day, when "all Cottage City were out promenading, or riding the wheel" (174), when everybody seemed to be merry and joyful, the girls notice the injustice of the suffering of Mrs. Hood's son and the stark contrast between the carefree vacationers and the family's poverty. Their pity and involvement are presented as exemplary; they have to be seen as ideal models for the readers to emulate. Deborah McDowell, one of the best-known critics of African American literature of this period, emphasizes the importance of this mission of spiritual uplift:

"However foreign it might seem to the sensibilities of modern readers, that mission was as urgent in Kelley's day as organizing against lynching, rape, Jim Crow, and black disenfranchisement. In fact, one of the most popular argument of the nineteenth century held that only the elevation of the spirit would obliterate racism and other 'earthly' injustices" (Introduction xxix).

And although the rhetoric is highly religious, Charlotte Hood's story is the familiar one of poverty, disease, and poor living conditions. It also includes a criticism of the gossip, the proud minister, the vain woman, the self-righteous churchwoman or the heartless rich man.

The dominantly religious context of the novel helps explain the choice of Martha's Vineyard as the setting. And although this places the novel in a tradition of spiritual narratives, it still does not mean that the novel is fully readable as part of a tradition of specifically African American literature. Race as part of identity is a contestable ground in *Four Girls*. Claudia Tate, in *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*, talks about a "fundamental reading problem" (22) that arises from a discussion of several presumably "white" or "raceless" works: the two Kelley novels, Amelia E. Johnson's *Clarence and Corinne* and *The Hazeley Family*, Paul Laurence Dunbar's *The Uncalled*, *The Love of Landry*, and *The Fanatics*, and William Stanley Braithwaite's *The Canadian*.

In *Four Girls*, there are hardly any references to race at all. It is sometimes mentioned that a person has a "rich complexion" (53), that they do not want to sit in "nigger heaven" (81) in the theater, or that one of the young men they meet lives in Tremont Street in Boston in the colored section of the city, but all the girls involved are described as having fair faces and blue or gray eyes. It is only glimpsed at but not at all emphasized that the Dare sisters are somehow darker than Allie and Vera because they "wore cream, which was most becoming to their rich complexions and dark eyes" (52) and because Jessie's hair is extremely hard to comb. Fred Travers, for example, is a "tall, finely formed young man, with light-brown curly hair, merry dark blue eyes, and a very pretty light (very *light*) mustache and side-tabs" (21). Erfort Richards is of "medium height, but slender, with a smooth dark face, a handsome pair of dark eyes, a small mouth with thin sensitive lips, and straight, handsome nose [...] thick, dark hair [...] hands [...] brown and slender" (22). Of course, it can be argued that any smooth dark face or rich complexion denotes the color of an African American and would be recognizable to any reader of that time. But the fact remains that this is nearly all there is about color and race: hints, but no unambiguous description or discussion of it as in so many other texts of that

time. These very light-colored heroines in African American texts are familiar from the novels of Frances Harper, Pauline Hopkins, Charles W. Chesnutt, and Paul Laurence Dunbar. But while the characters in most of these texts are often faced with having to decide whether they should pass as white, both *Four Girls* and *Megda* are remarkable because passing, the voluntary or involuntary choice of living as white people, is never even mentioned, let alone being an important part of the plot. Religion, gender, and class determine identity to a far greater degree than race.

In *Four Girls*, vacations do not become an end in themselves, they are a means toward an emotion that is more deeply felt and rewarding than the mere pleasure of three weeks. Several times the girls' walk down to the beach is ruined by "inward turmoil" that disturbs "any pleasure in natural beauty" (347). Only once is this pattern broken. One of the girls, Vera, and one of the young men, Fred, take a boat ride at night. The physical sense of strain and excitement, their nearly losing an oar and getting stranded, helps to bring about their engagement. Although the girls do not rhapsodize about the beauties of nature, the beautiful surroundings still contribute to a receptivity for experiences that go beyond the everyday life: moral resolution and religious conversion.

The idea of vacation taking and the culture revolving around a summer resort is displayed much more prominently in the novel by Dorothy West that was published in 1995, but is set in the same location in the mid-1950s, fifty years later than Kelley's novel. In these fifty years Cottage City has grown into Oak Bluffs, a summer resort with one section reserved for African American vacationers. Much of the action harks back to earlier generations, and thus continues the temporal frame established by *Four Girls*. While the earlier novel is sometimes hard to read because of its religious ideology, *The Wedding* overemphasizes the aspects of class and race. When West finished it in the mid-1960s, she put it away because she anticipated criticism about the class-conscious and color-defined elitist views of the protagonists. As James Robert Saunders and Renae Nadine Shackelford put it, "Though it addresses some important racial issues, the mere fact

that the setting is Martha's Vineyard adds an element of elitism with which most African Americans would no doubt have been uncomfortable" (9). *The Wedding* was published decades after its completion upon the initiative of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, a visitor to Martha's Vineyard and then editor at Doubleday. The novel is about a vacation resort, but again it is not easy summer reading. The theme is identity, the search for identity, and the intricate interplays between the races that prompt this search.

The plot revolves around Shelby Coles's choice of a white jazz musician as her future husband. The wedding that does not meet the approval of all family members is planned to take place in the Oval, an exclusive black enclave in Oak Bluffs. On her mother's side, Shelby is the descendant of a post-bellum marriage between the impoverished daughter of a former plantation owner and the son of the family's former slave. On her father's side, she comes from a light-colored African American family of prominent physicians and property-owners. The several subplots retell the history of these families while the main story concentrates on Shelby's reluctant fascination with the very dark and rich artisan Lute McNeil, who upsets her but ultimately cannot prevent her marriage with a white man.

In contrast to the earlier novel, color plays an essential role in the setup of the characters and their family constellations. Skin-color, the outward sign of a character's racial belonging, determines a parent's liking or disliking of a child, induces the choice of a spouse, and leads to the most crucial moments in the search for a person's identity. Many of the problems arise from an in-group color prejudice and are not mainly the result of racism imposed from outside or prejudice directly experienced. With the former Southern aristocrat and slave owner, Shelby's greatgrandmother, still living with the family, the novel features the rare sight of a white woman living in an African American surrounding. Although the loneliness of most characters is explained as being rooted in a family history of losses, loveless marriages, and disappointments rather than by race and racism, the learning about one's racial identity is at the center of one of the most moving chapters of the novel. It is the reminiscence of the grown-up

Shelby about an experience inextricably linked to the place of her childhood summer holidays.

Six-year old Shelby, with her "dark blue eyes and black curly hair" (61) and clad in a lovely yellow dress and red sandals, gets lost in the woods of the island. She finds a stray puppy and the two wander round the woods until they come into the white part of the island. Shelby is frightened by all the white faces around her because so far she has never had the experience of a friendly white person: "She simply knew that a dark face was almost always an approachable face, while a white face was always a passerby's face" (68). Although a search for her has been initiated in the meantime, the search is for a missing colored girl. The white mothers who see Shelby and the puppy cannot make the connection between the missing colored girl in a yellow dress and red sandals and the blond and blue-eyed girl they see. They had "colored their inquiries" (63) and thus cannot identify what they see. Although in retrospect they know that they "had glimpsed in Shelby the overlapping worlds" (63) and although one of the mothers knew "that too many people had blended too many colors not to strike a combination that looked as real as the real thing" (72), nobody helps Shelby and she suffers an agonizing fear for nearly the entire day.

This moment of color-blindness encapsulates the moment of growing up of a light-colored child in between the two races. Only after returning home "after a journey among strangers" (73) does Shelby receive back her own identity. For her family and neighbors the fact that Shelby was found very early in the day but not recognized by the white vacationers and the police, shows that it is not any visible sign that differentiates them from the rest of the island population. For Shelby the experience is traumatic and she turns to her greatgrandmother to help her come to terms with it. It has to be emphasized again that Shelby is the very light-colored child of intermarriage and that Gram, at this time, is about eighty years old. Shelby feels simple relief when Gram tells her that she is colored and her mother and father and sister are colored as well. Then she asks her greatgrandmother: "'Are you colored too?'" (80). The old woman, who otherwise is not noted for her tolerance and understanding, answers in the only

way that she knows will reassure the young girl: "I'm your gram" (80). Many readers will find this the greatest moment in the novel because in a simple statement family relationship replaces all identification according to color or race or class or gender. There is an echo of this later in the novel when Shelby's sister Liz talks to Shelby about color, class, and love and says: "When I pinch myself, I don't feel colored. I just feel the hurt of it" (92).

Shelby becomes aware of the fact that color cannot be the core of character. Identity, she learns, "is shaped by circumstance and sensitivity, and resistance to self-pity" (82). All of this takes place in the safe and contained world of the summer resort. "It was rare in this bucolic summer resort off the coast of New England to feel a ripple of unease about the color of one's skin" (74). Growing up, finding one's self, identifying oneself with one's family, making friends, living in an ordered and fixed surrounding, these are experiences that are facilitated by the island atmosphere.

One of the subplots of West's novel also associates the island with the search for self and the agonizing coming to terms with racism and prejudice of a young African American. It concerns Isaac Coles, Shelby's grandfather on her father's side. Isaac is the son of Preacher Coles, a former slave of about the same age as Gram, who, after emancipation, married a butternut colored woman, the daughter of a master and his beautiful slave. They have one son, Isaac. And while Preacher Coles works extremely hard to support himself and his family, the boy receives his first education with one of the northern women who worked as teachers in the so-called freedom schools in the South. Finding him very gifted and willing to learn, Miss Amy Norton, unmarried member of a rich family, took him with her to Boston in order to send him to high school. They used to spend their summer holidays on Martha's Vineyard together with the children of her brother. When Isaac is fourteen years old, he goes to Martha's Vineyard with Miss Amy for the first time without the rest of the family. He had spent the other summer weeks happily playing with the extended family and their friends, but now he is let down for the first time: the mothers of the vacationing little boys and girls speak to Miss Amy and make it known to her that they do not want Isaac to play

with their children any longer. Miss Amy is upset, "these women had taken the only child [she] had left and twisted him into a savage shape with their mouths" (145). She never talks to these women again and Isaac never returns to the island. "Isaac accepted this separation from the camaraderie of summer with the stoicism that was part of his school's curriculum, and part of the colored child's nature" (146). He knew his childhood had ended in that summer and he set himself to the task of becoming a physician.

He could not have known that his descendants, most of them successful doctors, would buy Miss Amy's cottage and spend their summer vacations on her island in the same way as the white families used to do. In matters of historical period, Isaac must have been on the island at about the same time as the four girls of the earlier novel. His encounter with racism and prejudice and Shelby's later encounter with color blindness links them with the four girls and their remarkably race-free vacation.

There is fairly little information about Emma Dunham Kelley because her novels were virtually unremembered until their reprint in the Schomburg series. The portrayal of the writer reproduced from the original edition of *Megda* shows a clearly African American woman. Her pen name is given as "Forget-me-Not," and in *Four Girls* it is given as "Emma D. Dunham-Hawkins," obviously a sign that she got married. The first novel is dedicated to her widowed mother and the second one to her "Dear Aunt Lottie," whom she calls her second mother. In the preface to *Four Girls*, the "Author" writes that most things in the book actually happened, and that the cottage where the girls stayed could easily be found. Obviously Kelley knew the place well and therefore chose a familiar setting that she could invest with enough local color and specific data to render it in a lively and interesting way.

Dorothy West, living from 1907 to 1998, was a famous member of the Harlem Renaissance, well-known publisher and journalist, and author of *The Living Is Easy*, by now a classic text published after the Harlem Renaissance, and a number of beautiful short stories. She is, of course, a much more accessible source of information about her own life and the place where she lived. As a long-term journalist for

the *Vineyard Gazette* she also provides the background information about the African American section of the island, which can be used as an indirect comment on Kelley's text. West describes the tradition of vacationing going down into the third or fourth generation:

There was a time when those cottage owners who were black numbered less than a dozen – indeed it was a gala summer when that number was achieved. [...] These early vacationists from Boston were among the first blacks anywhere to want for themselves and their children the same long summer of sun and sea air that a benevolent Island provided to others who sought it. These first blacks made later generations vacation-minded and Island-oriented. (*The Dorothy West Martha's Vineyard* 20f.)

The social set that West belongs to is a group of "Cottager women," about whom she writes in the *Vineyard Gazette* in 1982: "This correspondent is a charter member and the liaison officer of Cottagers Inc., a club of 100 women, grown to that figure from their beginnings 20-odd years ago as a small but persistent band of summer cottagers who were friends, their friendship bonding them, and their common love for the Island [...]" (*The Dorothy West Martha's Vineyard* 72).

In *Four Girls*, the young women spend some time considering what is proper for them, how they should behave towards the young men, what they should read, and how they should spend their meager financial supplies. They are girls working for their education and living, but they are clearly meant to represent a middle-class striving for proper behavior and class-conscious manners. This consideration for class is taken much further in West's novel. In her earlier novel, *The Living Is Easy*, West puts the desire for middle- and upper-class acceptance foremost into her heroine's mind. All of Cleo Judson's actions are motivated by the desire to be accepted and to spend her money conspicuously. In *The Wedding*, class is a constant reminder to Shelby's family that they have come a long way from their slave beginnings. They accept the marriage of their elder daughter Liz to a rather dark-colored man because at least he is a respected physician. It is important for Shelby's mother to have her daughter's wedding in the Oval and to impress all her friends with a beautiful ceremony. The

Coleses, as Shelby's family is reverently called, are described as belonging to an exclusive set on the island: "The Clark Coleses came closest to being as real as their [white and rich] counterparts. They had money, enough not only to spend but to save. They were college-bred, of good background. They lived graciously" (3). They were part of an upper-class community with subtly drawn boundaries between those who belonged and those who did not. The gradations were so finely drawn "that only an Ovalite knew on which level he belonged, and an outsider sometimes wasted an entire summer licking the wrong boot" (7). Shelby's family and her family's set of friends do not approve wholeheartedly of her decision to marry outside the race. The reason for this is not so much because Meade is white but mainly because Meade is not an academic and does not have what they consider a proper profession. At the same time, Shelby cannot bear any of the men her parents saw as ideal suitors "because they paid more mind to who her parents were than to who *she* was" (83).

Corinne, Shelby's mother, had been impregnated with colorism from her earliest beginnings and was afraid that one of her children might be as dark as her father Hannibal: "Chance had smiled again and given her two daughters in her likeness, but Hannibal's half of her makeup still had to be heard from, and the chance of that pattern continuing unbroken was too slight for her to risk a third try at bearing Clark a son" (66). Although she had always been drawn to darker colored men, her grandmother made her marry Clark Coles because of the social position he could offer her. Love is not part of this arrangement and both Clark and Corinne look for sexual satisfaction elsewhere. Class is, however, the essential ingredient of what they believe they have to strive for.

All the strong characters in Kelley's novel and most of them in West's novel are women. It is clear that these are novels written mostly for women and, in Kelley's case, more specifically for young women or girls. Both Kelley novels have been labelled "girl's fiction" (Hite xxviii) because of their young female protagonists and the message of proper behavior and spiritual salvation they deliver. In *Four Girls*, Mr. Atherton is always restrained by the gentle hand of Mrs. Atherton, their hostess. Vera asks, "Girls, how long do you suppose

'Mother' has been holding 'Grandpa' back with that little slender hand of hers?" (42) A smile, some gentle words, and commendable behavior disguise the subtle uses of power and will and determination and should not be confounded with meekness and submissiveness. In some long chapters of the novel, the girls discuss their reading material, especially their reading of Tennyson. Garnet especially praises Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott', and finds only one fault with him. He "makes his women too weak" (60). Garnet then tells the two younger girls the story of Guinevere and her strength in suffering. This leads to their discussion of the role of Arthur, whom they interpret as "too grand": "I can imagine just how he looked down on the poor, fallen queen, who lay at his feet with her golden hair sweeping the dust" (78). This, in turn, brings them to a discussion of the relative merit of men in general and the young men they know in particular. It comes out clearly that they are looking for understanding and love, but that they are prepared to have to sacrifice part of their well-being and independence for the working of a relationship. These discussions should be read as the educational message for the female readers. It says that women should test the characters of the suitors they are interested in very well. They should not indulge in pleasure and pleasurable activity only, but should be well aware of the roles open to them. They might turn into Mrs. Athertons, gently guiding their husbands and dominating their households. Or they might look for a partnership with men who respect but do not dominate them.⁴

In *The Wedding* the same question of marriage is restricted by the limits imposed upon the women by their families, by color prejudice, class considerations, and emotional bonding. Shelby knows that by marrying Meade she will have to live in between the two worlds and probably not feel at home in either one. The only alternative, however, is Lute McNeil, the rich social climber, with a record of wife beating and cruelty towards the three mothers of his three daughters. Lute is portrayed as much too domineering although, at the same time, his very masculine presence upsets Shelby quite much. In a dramatic scene at the end, Lute abuses the white mother of his youngest daughter with great cruelty. The child then runs out of the house and is killed in an accident. Although the text does not provide any evidence

that Shelby had known about his reckless behavior towards women, it is said that "[t]he scales had fallen from her eyes" (239). She finds out that he had used her to buy his entry into the elite society of the Ovalites. He had lied to her about his being concerned for her marrying outside her race and, above all, he had never really been in love with her. Shelby now understands, that "[c]olor was a false distinction; love was not" (240). The novel ends on the consolatory note with Gram cuddling the dark baby of Shelby's sister, something she had refused to do up to this moment.

Martha's Vineyard with its history as the center of religious activity and as a summer place for affluent African Americans provides the link between two novels that show the development of African American women's writing from spiritual narrative to society novel. In both novels the search for identity is placed against the beautiful background of the sea and the landscape in summer sunshine. The island serves the function of providing the stage for the unfolding of the conflicts. In *Four Girls* the protagonists become aware of the realities of poverty and the need for spiritual elevation, and in *The Wedding* the protagonists learn to cope with the intricate boundaries between complexion and character. Jessie's question at the beginning of Kelley's novel, "'How much of Cottage City do we own?'" (25) can be answered by Dorothy West in the positive: much of it, because "Oak Bluffs is an archetype of the art of people living together where their similarities are points of contact and their differences are intriguing regions to explore" ("Legend" 242).

Notes

¹ See the informative contribution to the *Oxford Companion to African American Literature* by James de Jongh. Many thanks go to my colleague Linda Reschen for her helpful comments and suggestions.

² Martha's Vineyard is also the setting of such diverse novels as Judy Blume's bestseller, *Summer Sisters* (1998), and the mystery novels by Cynthia Riggs (e.g. *Deadly Nightshade: A Martha's Vineyard Mystery*, 2001) and Philip R. Craig (e.g. *Death in Vineyard Waters: A Martha's Vineyard Mystery*, 1991).

³ Texts by and about West are a good source for background material about Martha's Vineyard in general and the African American population there in

particular. See the informative introduction and notes to *The Dorothy West Martha's Vineyard*, edited by James Robert Saunders and Renai Nadine Shackelford, and West's "The Legend of Oak Bluffs" in *The Richer, the Poorer*.

⁴ Useful background reading about the importance of marriage in African American texts are Ann duCille's *The Coupling Convention* and Claudia Tate's *Domestic Allegories*.

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Engineered Identities in Science Fiction

Elisabeth Kraus

The wish to transcend the human condition, to overcome vulnerability, pain, illness and death, has always been with *homo sapiens sapiens*. When an international consortium of scientists announced in April 2003, fifty years after the description of the DNA double helix by James D. Watson and Fredrick Crick, that it had completed the map of the human genetic code to an accuracy of 99.99 percent, great hopes about near future revolutions in biology, medicine and in society seemed realistic: the repairing of faulty individual genes that cause various diseases, the precision-engineering of smart drugs and medicines without side effects, but also the modification of body shapes, character traits, genders, and moods - the production of genetically engineered "designer babies." Germline Choice Technology (GCT) would guarantee inherited genetic modifications and thus provide a powerful, yet potentially dangerous tool for bringing about a conscious, artificial human self-transformation.

The 1990s, dubbed the "decade of the brain," also saw enormous progress in neuroscientific research. Scanning the brain from the outside with high-resolution functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), optical imaging or near-infrared scanning allow us to discover the neurons whose firing symbolizes a particular percept, or to observe which activity in the brain corresponds directly to visual awareness (cf. Damasio, "How the Brain Creates the Mind"). We will improve our methods to watch the brain as it remembers, desires, and imagines, figure out the molecular memory mechanisms of synapses, investigate how motor control works, or which kind of disorders are caused by the breakdown of specific brain modules. Samuel Barondes, an expert on mental illness and mood genes and the director of the Center for Neurobiology and Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, claims that just as the modification of the structure of an antihistamine and the accidental creation of the drug chlorpromazine (Thorazine) - the first truly effective medication for schizophrenia - by a French chemist in 1950 revolutionized psychiatry for

the rest of the twentieth century, "so will knowledge about individual genetic differences guide psychiatry over the next fifty years." (Barondes 267-269) Psychiatrist Nancy Etcoff predicts that the identification of gene variants that influence behavioural differences (e.g. increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease, depression or schizophrenia) will allow smart drugs to target the afflicted neural networks, produce "changes in gene expression that in turn change the strength of synaptic connections and produce structural changes that alter the pattern of interconnections between nerve cells in the brain." These structural changes equal those achieved in intensive learning, like the training of a professional musician, or in effective psychotherapy. (Etcoff 282) Wearable computers of the future will be able to recognize our emotions and prompt us to take a drug cocktail or see a therapist (Etcoff 287). Molecular biology will enable us to manipulate human life at its most basic level of operation, to sculpt both our bodies and our minds.

But once we are able to assess what is going on in the brains and minds of people, or even to implant memories (cf. *Total Recall*, Dir. Paul Verhoeven, 1990), or prevent or eliminate unwanted memories, especially traumatic ones, as in the recent film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Dir. Michel Gondry, 2004) - will our society be able to handle this knowledge?

Science fiction has long anticipated and speculated about the pros and cons of human technological self-evolution: from prosthetically enhanced supermen to post- or transhumans who live forever through a limitless supply of newly cloned bodies, from superbrights with nanotech neural modifications of mind and mood to disembodied minds uploaded into virtual environments where they live forever as a Copy in cyber-heaven. (The defenders of strong AI predict that there will be no clear division between artificial and biological intelligence).

Most of these visions raise some emotionally upsetting questions about our identity: What makes us "human" or "subhuman" or "superhuman"? Can we live with the analogies body/machine and brain/computer, and what changes/manipulations can we accept as ethical? Who decides what needs to be corrected, which direction the self-evolution of the human species should take?

A new discipline called 'Neurotheology' investigates what effect the workings of the brain have on religious belief. Neurotheologians, like Michael A. Persinger, have studied people suffering from temporal-lobe epilepsy who experienced spiritual, mystical revelations even though they are atheists. Is our longing for transcendence just a chemical process?

Some of these questions loom large in the following hard science fiction stories by the American authors Alexander Jablovkov and Nany Kress, and the Australian writer Greg Egan. Since hard SF realistically extrapolates from known science, we will encounter various attitudes towards biological and artificial intelligence. But the topic of identity is always at the heart of the matter.

Alexander Jablovkov, "Living Will"

Jablovkov's title "Living Will" refers to a computer which is specially programmed to execute the last will of an old gentleman who is struck with the beginning of Alzheimer's disease or senile dementia. Before the illness is about to destroy his memory, his psychological continuity, and thus his identity, protagonist Dr. Roman Maitland, systematically feeds his private memories into the "black boxes of field memories" linked to the powerful Terabyte-processor that he is beta-testing for Hyperneuron ("Living Will" 101, 104). He programs the computer with a model of his own personality, teaches it to think and feel like himself, works out the algorithms himself and the modifications needed to recreate his own conceptual universe - without confiding in his caring, beloved wife Abigail, even though he is scared about this new project.

Only Maitland's friend, Gerald Parks, finds out about the secret, because he directly asks the processor: "Computer Roman, why do you exist?" The machine answers: "I'm afraid I'm losing my mind [...] My memory is going, my personality fractioning." (110) Maitland started the project as soon as he discovered that he blanked out from time to time, forgot vital things. Afraid of eventually becoming "a drooling idiot" who will make his loving wife's life "a living, daily

hell," he wants to make a decision to end his life whenever he chooses, as long as he is still capable to - through the 'trained' computer - because the law forbids killing anyone, even though s/he may have wanted it in his/her last will. As foreseen, Maitland's memory deteriorates; sometimes he does not even recognize Abigail, his spouse of more than thirty years. Maitland's team does get the Humana research contract, but he knows they are covering for him in honor of his past achievements. "I'm losing everything that makes me *me*," Maitland tells his computer desperately, and they both agree "There is only one action you and I can finally take." (114).

Since Gerald Parks had discovered his secret, Maitland is able to persuade his friend to organize a pistol for him which Maitland locks into an inaccessible computer-controlled cabinet. When Maitland tries to talk to Abigail about his plans for suicide, she takes up a defensive attitude, and they cry together. After some time, when the dementia has further progressed, the computer's voice bids Maitland to send Abigail shopping for spinach pies. In the meantime, Maitland is ordered to get a plastic sheet, spread it out on the study floor, and shoot himself. The computer also calls Gerald and asks him to console Abigail on her return from the bakery. When Gerald begs the processor: "Can I come around and talk with you sometimes?", the answer is negative. "No, I am not Roman Maitland. Get that through your thick skull, Gerald. I am a machine. And my job is finished. Roman didn't give me any choice about that. And I'm glad." (121) The computer prompts the command words which Gerald has to speak in order to completely erase the memory store. "One by one, the indicator lights on the field memories faded out." (122) Gerald calls the police.

Clearly, Jablokov's message in this story reads: the intelligent machine can never fully substitute a human being! The computer may serve as a substitute for the human mind insofar as information is conceived of "as a (disembodied) entity that can flow between carbon-based organic components and silicon-based electronic components to make protein and silicon operate as a single system." (Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* 2) But Jablokov seems to embrace Norbert Wiener's view of cybernetics as "a means to extend liberal human hu-

manism, not subvert it," "less to show that man was a machine than to demonstrate that a machine could function like a man." (Hayles 7)

Greg Egan, "Learning To Be Me"

A much more radical attitude is taken by Greg Egan, one of the major voices in Australian Science Fiction, who so far has published seven novels and three short story collections. The protagonist of "Learning to Be Me" (1990) grapples with existential anxieties about his personal authenticity and identity when faced with the 'strong' AI position that the computer, which is to substitute for his brain, "really is a mind, in the sense that computers given the right programs can be literally said to *understand* and have other cognitive states." (John R. Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs" 67)

In the story's future society, most parents have a "jewel" (originally named "dual") implanted in the skull of each small child. The jewel - or Ndoli device - eavesdrops on the child's senses, reads the chemical messages carried in its bloodstream, and mimics all changes. In addition, a teaching component monitors the copying and keeps all processes in perfect synch. The first-person narrator explains, "Microscopic spiders had woven a fine golden web through my brain, so that the jewel's teacher could listen to the whisper of my thoughts." ("Learning" 201)

This method is similar to the one described by Ray Kurzweil, who - as a defender of strong Artificial Intelligence - anticipates the scanning of the brain from the inside with the help of nano-robot ("nanobot") technology which will allow us to copy the design of the human brain and to manipulate/enhance it (*Age of Spiritual Machines* 32 f). One of his predictions reads: "After the algorithms of a region are understood, they can be refined and extended before being implemented in synthetic neural equivalents. For one thing, they can be run on a computational substrate that is already more than ten million times faster than neural circuitry. And we can also throw in the methods for building intelligent machines that we already understand." (*Age* 36)

In Egan's story, most people undergo "the switch" in their early thirties to ensure their immortality - by that time, the organic brain starts declining. When the jewel takes control over the body, the nervous system is rewired, the teacher is deactivated, and the organic brain is removed and replaced with a mock-brain, which is no more capable of thought than a lung or a kidney. The jewel, however, "will endure for a billion years." ("Learning" 204)

Still, the identity problem has plagued the narrator ever since he was fourteen, when his parents told him, three years after the fact that they had switched. How can consciousness remain unchanged when it is separated from the material brain in which it was embedded? His father justifies their concealment of this step with the following words: "If you'd known we'd switched, at the time, you might have *imagined* that we'd changed in some way. By waiting until now to tell you, we've made it easier for you to convince yourself that we're still the same people we've always been." (203) Yet, although the narrator had convinced himself "that the jewel was No Big Deal," once the switch directly influences his personal relationships, he burns with resentment.

At sixteen, in love with Eva, he is absolutely convinced that there is a non-copyable inner life, a distinct, mysterious, authentically private human consciousness, something too complex to fit into disembodied ones and zeros. Human identity is more than merely an informational pattern. After making love, watching the stars with Eve, the narrator reports: "our souls conjoined in a secret place that no crystalline computer could hope to reach in a billion years of striving." And, knowledgeable as he is in various theories about how the mind emerges from the brain, he assures himself with this sophisticated argument:

I knew by then that the jewel's 'teacher' didn't monitor every single neuron in the brain. That would have been impractical, both in terms of handling the data, and because of the sheer physical intrusion into the tissue. Someone-or-other's theorem said that sampling certain critical neurons was almost as good as sampling the lot, and - given some very reasonable assumptions that nobody could disprove -

bounds on the errors involved could be established with mathematical rigour.

At first, I declared that *within these errors*, however small, lay the difference between brain and jewel, between human and machine, between love and its imitation. (205)

Eva, however, who is unafraid of switching, finds it absurd "to make a radical, qualitative distinction on the basis of the sampling density." She points out that "every human being was permanently losing thousands of neurons every day, by natural attrition" (205). Nevertheless, the narrator defensively insists that living neurons have "far more internal structure" than the crude optical switches in the jewel's so-called 'neural net': "who knew what the subtleties of biochemistry - the quantum mechanics of the specific organic molecules involved - contributed to the nature of human consciousness?" Even passing the Turing test is no proof "that *being* a jewel felt the same as *being* human." (206) When Eva provocatively asks how he could know that she was not just pretending to be herself, he gazes into her eyes: "Telepathy. Magic. The communion of souls." (206)

Later, as a nineteen-year-old student, neither the study of philosophy nor that of optical crystal engineering provide him with satisfactory answers. The Philosophy Department "had nothing to say about the Ndoli Device," they talk about Plato, Descartes, Marx, St. Augustine, "and - when feeling particularly modern and adventurous - Sartre, but if they'd heard of Gödel, Turing, Hamsun or Kim, they refused to admit it." (206-207) Many philosophers are distrustful of materialistic reductionist science, especially the new science of mind and the undignifying implications it will/may have for man's self-image. Our narrator, however, seems to side with neurologist Antonio R. Damasio, who is convinced that "explaining the origins and workings of the mind in biological tissue will not do away with the mind, and the awe we have for it can be extended to the amazing microstructure of the organism and to the immensely complex functions that allow such a microstructure to generate the mind." Damasio predicts "that by 2050 sufficient knowledge of biological phenomena will have wiped out the traditional dualistic separations of body/brain, body/mind and brain/mind." ("How the Brain" 9) One of Damasio's books is entitled

Descartes' Error, and, in the same vein, our narrator argues in a paper on Descartes against the dualism of the notion that human consciousness as 'software' (read 'soul') could be 'implemented' equally well on an organic brain or an optical crystal. But his philosophy tutor crossed this passage out as "IRRELEVANT!" ("Learning" 207)

In optical crystal engineering, he learns that a "sufficiently flexible neural net can be configured by feedback to mimic almost any system - to produce the same patterns of output from the same patterns of input - but achieving this sheds no light whatsoever on the nature of the system being emulated." The lecturer explains that "understanding" "is an overrated concept. Nobody really *understands* how a fertilized egg turns into a human. What should we do? Stop having children until ontogenesis can be described by a set of differential equations?" (207) Our narrator sees her point and knows he will never be able to get the answers he craves, not even after the operation.

At twenty-three, he marries thirty-one-year-old Daphne. Daphne is afraid switching will turn her into a robot, a puppet, a thing, and kill her personality. Now the narrator plays cool and tries to convince her she will still be herself. Only when she insists that he should switch on the same day together with her, like his parents had done, does he panic and flee.

At twenty-eight, all his friends had already switched, and not even inquiries into their most private childhood memories and thoughts brought any "errors" to light. The narrator joins organizations for people who refused to switch, but all they talk about is their neurotic fear of switching. So he keeps to himself, assuaging his own fears by 'naturalizing' the switch, by comparing it to the lifelong, steady changes in his body: "[I]f my sense of identity could survive the switch as easily as it had already survived such traumas as sleeping and waking, the constant death of brain cells, growth, experience, learning and forgetting - then I would gain not only eternal life, but an end to my doubts and my alienation." (211-212).

But then, at the age of twenty-eight, two months before the scheduled operation, something strange occurs: while on-line shopping, he realizes that he has lost control over his body. He intends to order apples, but - against his will - his fingers hit the key for pineap-

ples. Rationally, he knows that the switch could not happen spontaneously, since "Millions of nerve fibres had to be severed and spliced, by an army of tiny surgical robots which weren't even present in my brain - which weren't due to be injected for another two months." (213) Thus, the malfunction of the teacher, its failure to keep him aligned with his organic brain, reveals that *he was the jewel*: "I hadn't suddenly become powerless; I had *always been* powerless." (214) He feels that he has "been murdered every microsecond" for 28 years, as he had been forced to execute programmed actions; thus he has only existed as a "separate identity" endowed with free will for the few weeks of misery since the teacher failed. Because the jewel has so accurately mimicked his neurotic wavering between the fear of death and the longing for immortality, the protagonists fooled us readers as well.

Now our first person narrator is in the paradoxical situation of having to make himself "*appear* identical to that which they would force me to become"—that is, force himself back into synch with the jewel. Otherwise, when the doctors discover that he survived, they would kill him as "an aberration, a disposable glitch." (214-215)

This precarious dilemma is similar to the imaginary Teletransporting case studies that philosopher Derek Parfit uses in order to investigate our beliefs about the nature of personal identity over time. During the "normal", successful procedure of Teletransportation, as we know it from *Star Trek*, a Scanner here on Earth would destroy a person's brain and body, while recording the exact states of all cells. The information is transmitted to a Replicator, say on Mars, which will then create, out of new matter, a brain and body exactly like the original. Then, a New Scanner is invented which records your blueprint without destroying your brain and body. You can talk to yourself on Mars via Intercom! However, there are problems with the new machine: it records a person's blueprint accurately, but damages the cardiac systems which it scans, so that the Teleported person on Mars is healthy, whereas the original on Earth must expect to die within a few days. The Replica tries to console the Original with the same thoughts with which the Original recently tried to console a dying friend, and promises he will take care of the Original's family and continue his

work since he has the same intentions. Although this is little consolation to the dying man, Parfit argues: "Dying when I know that I shall have a Replica is not quite as bad as, simply, dying." (Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* 199-201).

Parfit calls the first procedure "Simple Teletransportation," travel on the *Main Line*. Some sci-fi fans would argue that the Replica waking up on Mars *would be the Original*, whereas others would believe that the Original dies and the Replica is *someone else*, who has been made exactly like the original. The second view seems to be supported by the *Branch-Line Case* since the life of the Original and that of its Replica overlap. Though they are exactly alike, they are different persons. When the Original dies, the Replica will live on. Parfit argues, as a reductionist, against the common assumptions, "being destroyed and Replicated is about as good as ordinary survival," (Parfit 201) since personal survival does not require personal *identity*, but only what he calls *Relation R*, "psychological connectedness and/or psychological continuity, with the right kind of cause." (Parfit 262)

Now, back to "Learning to Be Me." After "endless permutations of intellectual interpretation" on his plight, our protagonist, quasi a Branch-Line Case within one body (two diverging feedback loops), decides "ultimately, I can only act upon my desperate will to survive" ("Learning" 214) - that is, to try to forget "the revelation of my separateness" and "force myself back into synch." (213) This proves difficult since, for instance, one of his personalities cannot love Cathy because not even she knows that *he* exists! He lives in terror that he might be discovered.

When he awakes in the hospital one day, we hear the jewel refer to what he had thought was his 'real' self in the third person, as to a stranger: "So, our roles are reversed now. This body is *his* straitjacket, now . . ." (216) Obviously, the Jewel has 'inherited' all the branch-line doubts. The neurologist assures the protagonist that the "biggest shock, for most people, is that they don't feel different at all!", and Cathy thinks she consoles her lover by saying, "you know in your

heart you're still who you've always been." (217). Then, they scrape his skull and insert the non-sentient mock-brain.

According to normal procedure, for one week before the operation, both the organic brain and the jewel are running - small discrepancies must arise because real neurons die. But this radical divergence occurs only very seldom. The available options are: they can let the traumatized organic brain complain to the media and the legal profession, or "quietly erase the computer records of the discrepancy, and calmly remove the only witness." (219)

Obviously, the latter occurs; the eternal jewel speculates about the terrified man on whose brain the jewel was modeled. "I think of him now as a pale, insubstantial shadow. After all, I have no way of knowing if his sense of himself, his deepest inner life, his experience of *being*, was in any way comparable to my own." (220) We have come full circle, only the roles between organic brain and jewel are reversed.

In a way, we can think of "Learning To Be Me" as an updated version of the Doppelgänger motif: the encounter with one's copy is at the heart of the anxiety over the self, over one's identity.

Greg Egan, "Reasons to be Cheerful"

Again in this story, Egan's chief interest seems to be the relation between the mind and the brain. How does the set of processes we call *mind* emerge from the activity of the organ we call *brain*, encompassing some 100 billion neurons and weighing just three pounds? "Reasons to be Cheerful" raises the question: would you *be* happy if you had conscious control over what *made* you happy?

The long story begins with the sentence, "In September 2004, not long after my twelfth birthday, I entered a state of almost constant happiness. It never occurred to me to ask why." ("Reasons" 191) Soon, Mark, the first-person narrator, reveals that he developed a medulloblastoma, a malignant brain tumor that blocked one of the fluid-filled ventricles and inadvertently flooded his system with Leu-enkephalin, a naturally occurring neuropeptide, "which bound to some of the same receptors as opiates like morphine and heroin." (192) Ra-

tionally, the boy understands that his chances of survival are at best five more years, despite surgery, followed by aggressive radiation treatment and chemotherapy, yet he is physically incapable of feeling panic or real fear. "[L]ater I looked it all up, Leu-enkephalin wasn't an analgesic, to be secreted in emergencies when pain threatened survival, and it had no stupefying narcotic effects to immobilize a creature while injuries healed. Rather, it was the primary means of signaling happiness, released whenever behaviour or circumstances warranted pleasure." (193)

Afraid of the risky tumor operation, the parents transfer the boy from Sydney to a private hospital on the Australian Gold Coast, where the oncology unit is offering a new treatment for medulloblastomas: "A genetically engineered herpes virus introduced into the cerebrospinal fluid would infect only the replicating tumour cells, and then a powerful cytotoxic drug, activated only by the virus, would kill the infected cells." (194) The all-inclusive sixty-thousand-dollar treatment does destroy the brain tumor. To make sure that no resistant tumor cells remained, the boy is given "a short, sharp course of entirely different drugs, no longer linked to the herpes infection" - to induce "*apoptosis* - cellular suicide, programmed death." (196) But suddenly, he is unable to feel enjoyment or the slightest pleasure; he wakes up in the morning wishing he had died. Unable to respond in school, he is allowed to study online, which he does fairly successfully, "in the stretches of zombie-like numbness that came between the bouts of sheer, paralyzing unhappiness." (198-9)

An MRI scan proves that regions of his brain had died. In 2023, after vegetating in monotonous despair for 18 years, he learns about the South African Dr. Z. Durrani's "New Techniques in Prosthetic Reconstructive Neuroplasty." (202) Her method is

injecting an elaborately tailored polymer foam into the damaged region [which] released growth factors that attracted axons and dendrites from surrounding neurons, and the polymer itself was designed to function as a network of electrochemical switches. Via microprocessors scattered throughout the foam, the initially amorphous network was programmed first to reproduce generically the actions of the lost

neurons, then fine-tuned for compatibility with the individual recipient. (203)

He learns that there is an international database of neural structures from "20,000 cadavers who died without brain injury." (206) Dr. Durrani has used 4,000 records from the database, all males in their twenties or thirties, and remixed a new unique version for her patient which will hopefully combine with "[m]emories of formative experiences, memories of the things that used to give you pleasure, fragments of innate structures that survived the virus" (207) – that is, with shreds of his old identity.

After the successful operation, he feels pleasure in the company of people, in eating, sleeping - or, "the *prosthesis itself* was the part of me that was feeling all the pleasure - however seamlessly that process was integrated with everything else: perception, language, cognition ... the rest of me." (209) (He shares exactly the same doubts as the protagonist in "Learning to Be Me").

Psychological tests prove that he had inherited the widest possible taste in music, fine arts, food, personal relations, etc. - "*I hadn't scored any piece lower than 18 [out of 20].*" "Everyone I laid eyes on was a vision of perfection," "but I'd reacted as sanely as anyone to images of disease, starvation, death." (211) His hope of carrying a version of himself inside that might grow into a living person again had proved false. Dr. Durrani offers a last rescue which she already has discussed with the ethics committee: with his decision, she could program the microprocessors to allow him to consciously choose the things that make him happy. He has to visualize a moving slider control which a doctor had constructed inside his head, and the software monitors his visual cortex, tracking any fleeting imaginary perceptions.

Back in Sydney, he watches revelers dancing, laughing, kissing in a pub, a boy blissfully sniffing glue in an alley, a preacher beaming at him: "Jesus loves you, brother!" They all had stumbled on a way to produce Leu-enkephalin at will; he can only perceive them as "flayed anatomical figures, revealing a thousand interlocking muscles working together with effortless precision. Buried inside me, the machinery of happiness recognized itself, again and again." (216) Although Durrani

had provided him with the human capacity for joy, our protagonist painfully realizes "that happiness itself meant nothing. Life without it was unbearable, but as an end in itself it was not enough. I was free to choose its causes, and to be happy with my choices, but whatever I felt once I'd bootstrapped my new self into existence, the possibility would remain that all my choices had been wrong." (216)

He selects his preferred looks ("a lean, wiry body - well within the realms of possibility", 217), starts running, as he had done as a boy, to reclaim his atrophied body, and goes through puberty at thirty. There is another problem: the network had rendered him bisexual. Employed in a bookshop, he makes friends with customer Julia. He wants her to be happy and safe, is obviously in love, yet tortures himself with questions such as "But how could I pretend that I felt anything real for Julia, when I could shift a few buttons in my head, any-time, and make those feelings vanish? Even if what I felt was strong enough to keep me from wanting to touch that dial ..." (224)

They make love. "I'd spent the last ten minutes riding the blue control, trying to keep myself from coming without losing my erection." (224) She senses that he is gay or bisexual, but reassures him that she does not care. All his problems seem solved, since he would not have to manipulate his responses much longer as the prosthesis would adjust to this experience and could be left to its own devices. "Then I'd feel, as naturally as anyone, all the things I was now having to choose." (225)

With growing confidence, he tells her everything about his cancer treatment, and she accepts him nevertheless. However, the next day after work, in the middle of happily planning for the future, he receives a phone message from Julia with the tenor "*Too strange. Too sick. No one's fault.*" She could not bring herself "to carry on a relationship with 4,000 dead men." (226) He sheds tears, but does not touch the controls to flood his brain with Leu-enkephalin. Even if he had the doctor take away the software that gives him the power to choose, he knows "I'd never be able to forget where everything I felt had come from." (226) Mark gets in contact with his parents again. His father visits him.

Watching him, I thought; he's there inside my head, and my mother too, and ten million ancestors, human, proto-human, remote beyond imagining. What difference did 4,000 more make? Everyone had to carve a life out of the same legacy: half universal, half particular; half sharpened by relentless natural selection, half softened by the freedom of chance. I'd just had to face the details a little more starkly.

And I could go on doing it, walking the convoluted border between meaningless happiness and meaningless despair. Maybe I was lucky; maybe the best way to cling to that narrow zone was to see clearly what lay on either side. (227)

Mark feels at home in his shabby world, he seems to have found his balance.

Russell Blackford attributes to Egan "an unflinchingly materialistic conception of human identity and character." (Blackford et al., *Strange Constellations* 191) He calls Egan "one of the hardest of hard sf writers," one who "has unremittingly expressed an austere philosophy of scientific materialism, in which human identity and character are ultimately reducible to the functioning of our neuro-physiology, to the productive processes of biological evolution and, beyond those, to the operations of purely physical laws, entities and forces." (Blackford, "Symposium" 83)

Nancy Kress, "Beggars in Spain"

Whereas the two stories by Greg Egan were primarily concerned with the mechanics of the brain, Nancy Kress' Hugo and Nebula-Award winning novella "Beggars in Spain" deals with the social and ethical questions involved in genetic engineering. If there is an 'over-class' that is genetically superior, how will it affect the self-conception and sense of identity of the unenhanced, the 'merely human', and that of the enhanced?

Roger Camden, a rich, ruthless middle-aged industrial tycoon, orders a designer baby from Dr. Ong: he opts for a blonde, green-eyed girl with a genetic disposition towards slenderness, musicality, high intelligence, and - much to his wife's chagrin - an efficient, excellent

child that "gets a lot more done" than 'normal' people. He is convinced: "Sleep is just lost time, wasted life. It's a little death." ("Beggars" 29) Having hacked Ong's data banks, Camden knows that the specialist has already created twenty children who do not need to sleep at all; nineteen of these are healthy, intelligent, and psychologically normal. When Camden's wife inquires about the fate of the twentieth beta-test family, she learns that it was killed by its single mother - the couple separated during pregnancy - because she "could not bear the twenty-four-hour crying of a baby who never sleeps." (16) Camden blames Ong's Biotech Institute for not picking parents wealthy enough to afford nurses in shifts.

Dr. Susan Melling, who developed the genetic modification affecting sleep, explains that the release of human growth enzyme and neural repair and efficiency are not impaired if some genetic adjustments are made. Although the non-sleep children have *not* had IQ genetic manipulation, they are even more intelligent and more joyous since studies have proved that, as antidepressants suppress REM sleep, vice versa the suppression of REM sleep stops people from getting depressed.

The *in vitro* fertilization is successful on only the second try, and the implant in Mrs. Camden's uterine wall develops well except for one complication: by sheer chance, both ovaries released eggs and were fertilized, but only one egg underwent gene surgery. So, of the two non-identical twins, only one has been genetically altered, the other is a so-called normal baby, also female, just as Mrs. Camden had wanted in the first place.

The birth is uncomplicated. Blond Leisha is instructed by Nanny, while dark-haired Alice and her parents sleep. At five, the two girls start attending a special school in Chicago, with Leisha in a class with older children. Soon, Alice insists on being transferred to the school that the neighbor's children go to. Mrs. Camden turns into an alcoholic and is finally taken to a hospital. Alice is depressed because Daddy prefers Leisha; Leisha embraces and consoles her. Camden soon marries Dr. Susan Melling.

When Leisha is fifteen, she insists on meeting other sleepless mutants, of which there are over 1,000 in the United States alone. Leisha meets and gets to like 17-year-old Richard Keller, shares experiences with 12 other sleepless people, and learns that the Sleepless are hated. Whereas some of the group argue that the Sleepless, with their greater concentration, greater biochemical stability and more time, should have their own society, Leisha protests in the name of the Declaration of Independence. "[It] doesn't say all men are created equal in ability. It's talking about rights and power; it means that all are created equal *under the law*. We have no more right to a separate society or to being free of society's restrictions than anyone else does. There's no other way to freely trade one's efforts, unless the same contractual rules apply to all." (42) But Tony, one of the Sleepless, refers to Kenzo Yagai's philosophy "happiness through individual effort" (Yagai is a Sleeper), and asks Leisha: "[W]hat obligation do we have to those so weak they don't have anything to trade with us? We're already going to give more than we get; do we have to do it when we get nothing at all? Do we have to take care of their deformed and handicapped and sick and lazy and shiftless with the products of our work?" (42-3)

Their curiosity to know what it means to sleep brings a group of Sleepless to organize Interleukin-1, "an immune-system booster, one of many substances which as a side effect induced the brain to swift and deep sleep." (44) The drug consumers all wake up with headaches, a feeling of nausea - but there had not been any dreams.

In one of the key scenes of the novella, just before Alice and Leisha are supposed to leave for college, Alice announces that she is pregnant. Her reasons: "Because I want something to love. Something of my *own*. Something that has nothing to do with this house." (45) By removing her birth control cap, she partly intended to spite her Daddy. Leisha feels Alice's decision is "irrational". Alice opens her arms for Leisha and calls her "the baby", thus offering her warmth and love. But Leisha seems too self-sufficient to need help, and when she offers to help Alice if Daddy would not, Alice repudiates Leisha: "I don't need your help."

Leisha, now sixteen and at Harvard, falls in love with Stewart, a Sleeper. But there is growing resentment in their fellow students against the Sleepless, although Leisha personally offers to help them with their test preparations. When her room is vandalized and many of her Sleepless friends are boycotted, she is pressured to side with the enhanced. But Leisha vehemently protests:

I believe the Sleepers are the same species as we are. Are you going to punish me for that? Are you going to *add* to the hatred? Are you going to tell me that I can't belong to a wider world that includes all honest, worthwhile people whether they sleep or not? Are you going to tell me that the most important division is by genetics and not by economic spirituality? Are you going to force me into an artificial choice, us or them? (51)

Leisha visits Alice in her rural retreat in Pennsylvania, where she lives with a silent carpenter named Ed, who is 20 years older than her. Alice is eight months pregnant, and happy.

At the age of twenty-two, in her final year at Harvard, Leisha reads a headline "SLEEPLESS MUTIE BEGS FOR REVERSAL OF GENE TAMPERING". (54) A seven-year-old girl suffers emotional abuse from her parents because they cannot handle having a child genius. The Sleepless organize themselves and help each other in their personal fights, with Leisha Camden financing the legal battles. The group organizes a 150 mile squared safe place in the Allegheny Mountains in southern NY State called "Sanctuary" for the Sleepless, but Leisha still pleads for "patient integration of the Group into the mainstream" (57)

When the first Sleepless gives birth to a child - sleeplessness is a dominant gene and thus passed on to the next generation - the beggars are getting nastier. Camden dies, and Susan, who had gone back to research, has found out that Interleukin-1 is one of the substances that boost the immune system. "They stimulate the production of antibodies, the activity of white blood cells, and a host of other immunoenhancements. Normal people have surges of IL-1 released during the slow-wave phases of sleep. That means that they - we - are getting boosts to the immune system during sleep." Yet, except for Chicken

pox and three minor colds, Sleepless Leisha has never been sick. An alternate theory could explain this strange puzzle,

that the burst of immune activity existed as a counterpart to a greater vulnerability of the body in sleep to disease, probably in some way connected to the fluctuations in body temperature during REM sleep. In other words, sleep *caused* the immune vulnerability that endogenous pyrogens like IL-1 counteracted. Sleep was the problem, immune-system enhancements were the solution. Without sleep, there would be no problem. (66)

And the analysis of the brain of a Sleepless accident victim further disclosed that Sleepless are not going to age. Their organs stay perfect, their tissue is being regenerated. Anti-Sleepless sentiment grows, and even Leisha's bodyguard quits. Leisha resigns to taking refuge in the Sanctuary herself, but first she wants to close and sell Camden's house in Chicago with Alice. Old feelings of envy and jealousy rise in Alice, and she hits Leisha in the mouth. But then a task reunites them: asked to rescue a Sleepless girl from abuse from her parents, they ingeniously manage to take the child to a hospital and then get her declared a ward of the state. During all these turbulences, Leisha and Alice get really close. Leisha is now able to correct Kenzo Yagai's philosophy:

Trade isn't always linear. You missed that. If Stewart gives me something, and I give Stella something, and ten years from now Stella is a different person because of that and gives something to someone else as yet unknown - it's an ecology. An ecology of trade, yes, each niche needed, even if they're not contractually bound. Does a horse need a fish? Yes. (89)

So the haves do owe the have-nots, otherwise "the ecology of help" would not work. Leisha comes to realize that it was hubris not to accept Alice's help. "That's what Alice wanted, all those years ago in her bedroom. Pregnant, scared, angry, jealous, she wanted to help *me*, and I wouldn't let her because I didn't need it. But I do now. And she did then. Beggars need to help as well as be helped." (89)

And she tells her dead Daddy how special Alice is, how mistaken he was in his judgment of his 'natural' child.

Kress shows the rational individualism of the biologically privileged in a positive light, especially since the Sleepless derive joy and dignity from their own achievements; however, this self-reliance leads to an increasing class-division in the U.S., unless it is tempered by an altruistic, caretaking instinct, and an acknowledgement of interdependence, both in the private and public realms.

In a way, this universalistic moral vision pleads for intercultural pluralism and hybridity extended to the opposition pair enhanced/unenhanced. If "otherness" is seen as a complex historical phenomenon, it can be analyzed rationally and objectively, and - hopefully - some common space can be found for genuine interaction.

According to Bruce Sterling and many other futurists, the enhancements will be less spectacular than the headlines promise, so we should have time for piecemeal and peaceful accommodation. And with sceptics like Hubert L. Dreyfus, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, or Dietmar Kamper, we may trust Jean-Francois Lyotard's saying that thinking without the body verges on crime (Kamper 12-13).

The classic, ideas-based science fiction stories that I discussed critically explore new man/machine interfaces for us and make us reflect on the fact that all technologies are political: they are externalizations of ourselves. We, as agents, must watch "the cyborg body politic." (cf. Gray, *Cyborg Citizen*, 9-20) Thus, it is deplorable that in academia a certain fear of "science in fiction" still outweighs the interest in the newest scientific developments, even though the quality of contemporary science fiction leaves nothing or little to be desired. Students *can* identify with Peter Freese when he reminds us of C.P. Snow's admonishment that literary intellectuals should be able to describe the Second Law of Thermodynamics before they criticize scientists for being unaware of Shakespeare's work or new literary developments. (Freese, *From Apocalypse* 11-12) The closing of the gap between the humanities and the sciences seems even more vital in an age when the so-called 'life sciences' are about to actively shape our evolution.

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The Old Woman as the Prototypical American - An Anocritical Approach to Gender, Age, and Identity

Roberta Maierhofer

The American cultural narrative of personal identity has been a formative influence on the study of American literature. Since the mid 1970s, the prototypical American male protagonist with his quest for self as a rebel against societal pressure has been supplemented by the female hero. Feminist literary criticism reclaimed the female hero of traditional literature and reinterpreted her in the light of feminist analysis. In the 1981 study of *The Female Hero in American and British Literature*,¹ the main emphasis of the investigation is on youth. As if anticipating the shift of focus in later years, the two feminist critics of this study, Pearson and Pope, at one point in the text acknowledge the possibility of age as a decisive factor of the heroic: "In many cases, women begin new lives in old age."² I suggest going a step further and propose to look at female aging as a paradigm of American culture, as aging – in contrast to stereotypical notions – does not bring a loss of identity, but emphasizes difference instead of communality,³ and expresses individualism more prominently than in youth.

Old age is complex. It is not merely the final stage of life, uncomplicated and universally experienced. It has different meanings for different people, whether one is already older, or whether advanced age is still in one's future, as well as according to social status, economic security, region and [...] gender.⁴

In addition, aging as a continuum also questions the definition of identity as such: What is essential and what is changeable in oneself?⁵ To express the ongoing definition of self that is continuous and creative and not reduced to the period of youth, the anthropologist Sharon Kaufman speaks of the "ageless self."⁶

Susan Koppelman Cornillon writes in one of the first feminist contributions to academic literary scholarship – *Images of Women in Fiction* (1972) – that "people are beginning to see literature in a new perspective"⁷; this can also be said of literary scholarship taking place

at the beginning of the 21st century in the field of age and aging studies. Feminist literary scholarship in the late 1970s turned from analyzing female characters in male texts according to male experience, to an analysis of texts that dealt with female experience and perspective. In 1978, Nina Baym criticized American literary scholarship for having a bias in favor of things male: whaling ships rather than sewing circles as a symbol of the human community. Baym speaks of literary critics as "displaying an exquisite compassion for the crises of the adolescent male, but altogether impatient with the parallel crises of the female."⁸ Whereas the second wave of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s emphasized issues associated with the earlier years in life, with "the graying of American feminism" it is no longer adolescence but old and middle age that has become a concern to feminists, and age has been introduced as a social and cultural marker.

Based on the understanding that the dominant topic of American literature and culture is the question of identity, I have analyzed in other publications different texts such as novels, short stories, film, and biography in order to determine in which way women integrate an understanding of self in growing old, and which coping strategies female characters develop in fiction in order to come to terms with the various aspects of growing old.⁹ In American literature, identity is discussed in terms of possibilities as well as limitations of the individual within social boundaries, leading to the necessity of narrating the search of the self within a social context as an expression of this identity. As scholars of American Studies have noted, the idea of personal identity as private property asserted the continuity of individual identity in the midst of massive social change – civil war, immigration to the new world, religious dissent, and radical changes in economic, political, and social structure. Personal continuity was expressed through the linear narrative of an individual life, usually a spiritual narrative of survival through devastating experiences in which one's personal identity was endangered, if not lost altogether. Therefore, American literature can look back on a long tradition of autobiographical texts; in fact, autobiography has often been referred to as *the* American literary art form.

The genre of life-story telling fulfilled two functions in American culture: on the one hand it served to establish an "American" perspective, that is to write history; on the other it narrated personal identity by positioning the individual as a main protagonist in the course of events. In addition, autobiography provided a platform for those whose identity was ignored or distorted by social stereotypes. The notion of identity as private property proved especially important to those who had been denied the right to own; thus the struggle for identity – and, more specifically, to narrate the search for identity – is the struggle to acquire property, often by those who have been dispossessed by emigration, by slavery or by laws (implied or actual). The autobiography of personal identity is a story of contradictions. It is the narration of the individual's lifelong resistance to social pressures, the struggle to remain oneself. It is also the story of the personal choice to reject oppressive conventions and forge a new social identity suitable to the individual.¹⁰ Autobiographies can thus be read as literature of transformation, as a reflection of experience, and as the performance of the individual, and the genre is therefore especially important for African-American culture. The Harvard scholar Richard Newman – defining slave narratives as statements of self against invisibility with a clear demand to take notice: "I am here, and you're going to have to deal with me." – emphasizes the importance of such acts of self-assertion for the black community today:

The genre continues. It just changes in form somewhat to keep up with the times, but the principle is the same because not enough has changed. The question of humanity is still an issue, the question of identity is still an issue. Autobiographies are self-authenticating. It's all saying the same thing as the slave narratives – "I was born, I existed." Why? Because these things are still in doubt in the larger culture. So there's no end to black autobiography.¹¹

In this paper, I want to call for recognition of the importance of literary critical interpretations as a basis of establishing the implicit meaning of aging. By linking theories of gender and age, I propose a search for a specific female culture of aging in the tradition of Elaine Showalter's "gynocriticism" – a study of women writers and of the

history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women.¹² Germaine Greer uses the Latin word "anus" – "old woman" – to create the term of "anophobia" to describe the fear of old women.¹³ I suggest the term "anocriticism" as a method to trace the aspect of female aging in texts of American literature in order to generate understanding for what it means – in Margaret Morganroth Gullette's term – to be "aged by culture."¹⁴ As feminist theory distinguishes between sex and gender, so should a distinction be made between chronological age and the cultural stereotypes associated with old people, which would help escape the confining binary opposition of young and old. Starting with the premise that age – similar to race, class, and gender – does not flow naturally or inevitably from the individual's anatomical body, scholarship could analyze the way age identity is constructed in literature and in society, for both young and old. By determining in what way "youth" and "age" come to have certain meanings at a particular place and time, and stressing the necessary interrelatedness of these meanings, one can understand that what is considered typically "young" in a given society depends in part on being different from what is "old", and what is "old" on not being "young." This understanding can lead to the conclusion that what is considered age-neutral, i.e. "universal", is implicitly often male and young, and exclusive of the female and old. By placing literature in a social, cultural, and political context, one can reconstruct existing disciplines and traditional paradigms. In addition, the methods used to deconstruct traditional ideologies can be helpful in the field of age studies and the study of aging.¹⁵

The novel *Praisesong for the Widow*¹⁶ by Paule Marshall is classified not as an autobiography, but as a fictional text. It can, however, be read as a self-story, where in the matrix of race, gender, and age an assertion of identity is presented. A discussion of female characters aware of their own sexuality allows for a repudiation of culturally negative, trivializing stereotypes associated with aging women, and thus countersets the invisibility of old women in our society. Feminists have long seen the female body as a contested site of institutional and personal power. Within Western culture women have traditionally been defined as body. While liberal feminists have been

consistently suspicious of the woman/body equation, others, including matriarchal feminists, have found empowerment in the association of women with the corporeal. Embodiment as a provisional form of power in much writing by women is, however, very often linked to death or ill health, which has allowed for the textual and cultural representation of the otherwise – to use D. A. Miller's term – "unnarratable" female body.¹⁷ The aging, healthy female body is often viewed as a symbol of decay and decline, and aging women are often denied their sexuality and sensuality. Nancy K. Miller speaks of aging as a creative act, of a "coming to terms with a face and body," a dialogue between the internal and external.¹⁸ In this essay, I will discuss *Praisesong for a Widow* as a text that shows the protagonist involved in this imaginative process of aging, where the individual not only comes to accept her "embodiment" but learns to see the beauty of an aging self as represented through her body. Discrimination of older women is based on the fact that appearance determines identity. The relationship of a woman to her body is an important aspect for the definition of her identity. In Western culture, identity has traditionally been defined independently of the material, embodied reality as a form of self-definition. This has led to a different perception of the self from the inside and the outside. While youth has positive significance based on physical appearance, the aging female body carries a negative message. Using Paule Marshall's novel as an example, I want to point to possibilities for older women to overcome this binary and develop a sensual relationship to their bodies, and thus question social norms. Our physical appearance is neither a given nor a mere conglomerate of neurons, hormones or genes, but inscribed by the concrete experiences of a life both individual as well as collective, as our humanity is expressed in our physicality. The anthropologist Mary Douglas speaks of the body as a powerful symbolic form, a surface, where the rules, hierarchies and even metaphysical social concerns are inscribed and strengthened through the concrete language of the body. The microcosm, the physical body, reproduces symbolically certain fears of the macrocosm, the social body.¹⁹

In *Praisesong for the Widow*, identity is defined in terms of an acceptance of embodiment within a self-story, and therefore strongly

linked to sexuality and pleasure. The female aging body is defined as pivotal in finding a sense of identity. The novel has been interpreted in many different ways. Thus, Keith A. Sandiford speaks in his essay with the subtitle "The Reluctant Heiress, or Whose Life is it Anyway?" of an embedding of the individual in a socio-mythic structure of contingent relations and responsibilities. By expanding the heroine's consciousness away from the individualism of her past to the collectivity of her Afro-American roots, the atomistic concept of individualism is shattered.²⁰ While Missy Dehn Kubitschek defines Marshall's novel as a female search for identity in different stages of life,²¹ Gay Wilentz emphasizes the fictional aspect of this search by defining it as a female task that takes place in the narrative, and needs to be completed both by author and protagonist in order to guarantee continuity.²² Giulia Scarpa links this search for personal and cultural identity to the life course, and implicitly emphasizes the importance of aging when she describes the novel as the "simple story of a middle-aged woman who faces the uneasy task of reassessing her life while going through a major crisis."²³ Reflecting my approach to aging as a heroic act, Velma Pollard speaks of Paule Marshall's novel as "her heroic tale, its existence as substrate consciousness in the heroine"²⁴.

Avey Avatara Johnson is a 64-year-old middle-class widow, cruising the Caribbean with two friends, when she suddenly decides to disembark on the Caribbean island Grenada in order to fly back to New York City. The decision to return home is motivated by torturing nightmares in which her great aunt Cuney appears and summons her with ever increasing urgency to Tatem, the island where she used to spend the summer as a child. When she misses her flight back to New York, she spends the night in a hotel where she experiences hallucinations aroused by conflicting dreams, memories and visions, and where she confronts her rage and grief at having wasted a life in pursuit of material wealth; she is finally able to mourn her husband, whom she lost long before his actual death, when he decided to assimilate and dedicate his life to success and upward mobility. The next day she meets an old man, Lebert Joseph, who tells her about the "Carriacou Excursion," an annual island festival honoring the long-time ancestors, and he convinces her to accompany him on the trip. This meeting of

the out-island people with family roots on the island represents in its rituals and myths a connection to the past and the original African tradition. The ceremony of the great drums, for example, evokes a revival of the spiritual powers of the African past. Through the journey to Carriacou and the intensive experience of the dance ritual and the music Avey Johnson discovers her own identity as an American of African descent. After this experience, she decides to return home with a mission – to teach the next generation the importance of the past as a basis for a definition of one's identity in the present, to rediscover the spiritual home of her ancestors in Tatem, South Carolina, and thus take on the role of her great aunt Cuney for the next generation. Avey Johnson's spiritual orientation and the rediscovered power to become socially active is won in almost ritual steps.²⁵ At the beginning of her marriage, Avey cultivates the simple rituals of her cultural heritage, such as Afro-American music and poetry, dancing and their visits to Tatem, and recognizes and savors these aspects of her life as sustaining and valuable for her existence; the knowledge of the importance of these rituals is lost, however, when she and her husband determine their lives according to the American dream of material success and social upward mobility. Angelita Reyes speaks in this context of the loss of cultural orientation and the spiritual death of both Avey and her husband: "[T]hey had died on the killing ground of materialism and false cultural values."²⁶ Reyes' interpretation focuses on the ritual acts as a means of achieving self-confidence concerning Avey's cultural heritage, but ignores the importance of the physical in this process.

My anocritical approach allows for recognition that Avey's definition of self takes place in the conscious acceptance of her aging, which occurs in a new awareness of her own body. Both Reynes and Linda Pannill,²⁷ as well as other critics, emphasize the detailed narration of physical aspects in the novel as pivotal, such as the vomiting and defecating of the sea-sick Avey during the journey to Carriacou Island, where she recalls her girlhood journeys to Tatem and her neighborhood's annual outing on the Hudson to Bear Island. At that stage in her life, she had felt invisible threads as strong as the lifelines at Coney Island, connecting the hearts and navels of everyone board-

ing. The rough journey by water also brings to mind the Middle Passage and the watery rocking of the womb. Avey remembers from her childhood an Easter Sunday sermon when the church seemed to rock in the hands of God until she was sick to her stomach. As a grown woman she becomes sick on the small boat, but this sickness is purgative. An oppressive heaviness long vaguely felt is relieved.²⁸ Similar to Avey's physical reaction to the dreams of her great aunt Cuney, where she wakes up with bruises and marks on her body, it is also this sickness on the boat that marks the beginning of a journey towards herself. It is foremost the needs of her body that initiate Avey's self-awareness. Waxman draws the conclusion that Avey has a childlike sensitivity and vulnerability.²⁹ This reference to childhood is mentioned several times, but the comparison with birth and childhood denotes foremost a state of indecisiveness and insecurity; this state Avey experiences at the beginning of the journey to her self - "[T]he self crouched like a bewildered child behind the vacant, tear-filled eyes" (*Praisesong*, 172) -, before she faces her own aging: "He saw how far she had come since leaving the ship and the distance she had yet to go." (*Praisesong*, 172) Similar to the dreams of her great aunt, she experiences the encounters with the old man, who enables her definition of identity in age, as physical, violent meetings: "She felt as exhausted as if she and the old man had been fighting – actually, physically fighting." (*Praisesong*, 184) When Avey is given into the care of two old women on the journey to the island, she is reminded of people of her past. Throughout the novel her memories of the past find a correlation to her experiences in the present, thus linking the different stages of her life. Avey's distance to her own self finds a physical expression when she becomes violently ill. In this passage of the novel, the two old women caretakers make her feel like a child again - "she was seven or eight years old again." (*Praisesong*, 208) Her lack of bodily control mirrors a childlike state, and the cleansing effect is welcomed by the two old women as something good and necessary: "Then: 'Bon, li bon.' Saying it as if even this final ignominy was a good thing in their eyes." (*Praisesong*, 208f.) Her initial feelings of relief at giving way to the nausea turn into an orgiastic, sensual experience:

All of a sudden, before she could even grasp what was taking place, the powerful spasms were reaching deep into her. [...] Until, to her utter disbelief, there it was: the familiar irresistible pressure, followed by the clenched muscles easing, relinquishing their hold under the pressure; and then, quickly, the helpless, almost pleasurable giving way. (*Praisesong*, 207)

Her initial emotion of childlike vulnerability gives way to a liberating, cathartic sexual experience. Avey does not react like a child, but accepts her own aging body as part of her identity. This interpretation is supported by another passage of the text, where Avey's clumsy movements are compared to those of a small child ("slow and clumsy as a two-year-old just learning how to undress itself") (*Praisesong*, 152), but her body is described as having been marked by time:

The sodden girdle came last and after stripping it away she stood for a moment gazing vacantly down at her breasts. At the stretch lines like claw marks. At the scar where the small benign tumor had been removed when she was in her forties. At the bruised-looking nipples. (*Praisesong*, 151f.)

Pannill also emphasizes the age-related aspect, when she compares the bathing and massage of Avey by Lebert Jopseph's daughter, the widow Rosalie Parvay, with the bathing of a corpse or a child, thus juxtaposing death with resurrection.³⁰ Rosalie Parvay and Avey have two things in common: their age and their marital status. Rosalie, however, although a little younger than Avey, has accepted her cultural identity and thus her body as part of her self: "[H]er taut little body had already achieved his pared-down, annealed, quintessential look." (*Praisesong*, 216) Avey's original resistance towards Rosalie's attempts to bathe her are initially linked to her suppressed feelings, "speaking out of her obsessive privacy and the helpless aversion to being touched she had come to feel over the years." (*Praisesong*, 219) This bathing, however, develops from a procedure applied to a child to a sensual, sexual and finally orgiastic act, leading to a redefinition of identity in age which overcomes the dichotomy of body and soul:

Until finally under the vigorous kneading and pummeling, Avey Johnson became aware of a faint stinging [...]. And this warmth and the faint stinging reached up the entire length of her thighs. [...] Then, slowly, they radiated out into her loins: When, when was the last time she had felt even the slightest stirring there? [...] The warmth, the stinging sensation that was both pleasure and pain passed up through the emptiness at her center. Until finally they reached her heart. And as they encircled her heart and it responded, there was the sense of a chord being struck. All the tendons, nerves and muscles which strung her together had been struck a powerful chord, and the reverberation could be heard in the remotest corners of her body. (*Praisesong*, 223f.)

Avey's memories of the happy times of her marriage emphasize the bodily aspects of the relationship, in which Avey had defined the sexual act as an act of liberation:

And the miracle which was strictly a private matter, that had only to do with her, then took place. She slipped free of it all: the bed, the narrow hallway bedroom, the house, Halsey Street, her job, Jay, the children, and the child who might come of this embrace. She gave the slip to her ordinary, everyday self. And for a long pulsing moment, she was pure self, being, the embodiment of pleasure, the child again riding the breakers at Coney Island in her father's arms, crowing in delight and terror. (*Praisesong*, 128)

As this example shows, the sexual connection with an other describes a movement towards the self in which the physical experience enables an expression of self. Paule Marshall, when asked about her work, has emphasized the importance of the individual and the process of defining one's identity.³¹ In a different context, Marshall describes sexuality as a "free zone"³² which allows the protagonists to escape the social limitations and find a level of communication in the physical:

I think I write about sexuality, people coming together sexually, as the place, the time in our lives when we can sometimes set aside tensions and animosities and conflict that beset us, a place where, for just a short while, we come together, embrace, and sometimes truly communicate.³³

At the beginning of the novel, Marshall emphasizes bodily aspects while describing Avey's friends accompanying her on the cruise. Both Thomasina Moore ("a thin-featured woman in her early seventies with a lined and hectic brow [...]: old age beginning to warp the once graceful curve of her back") (*Praisesong*, 18) as well as Clarice, whose overweight is linked to her worries, show their alienation from their own selves in a physical form. While Thomasina sees Avey's announcement of her departure as a rejection of their values and thus reacts with anger and aggression, Clarice shows resignation and defeat. Avey's sudden decision to leave the cruise is interpreted as an act of deceit and abandonment of their middle class and leisurely life style, achieved by assimilation to the dominant white culture. In contrast to Thomasina und Clarice, the two old but culturally authentic women who take care of Avey on the passage to Carriacou are described despite their age as physically strong and capable, "one stout and solid, the other lean, almost fleshless but with a wiry strength" (*Praisesong*, 205):

[...] a stout woman in her eighties with large capable hands and a gold-rimmed smile, and her thinner neighbor of the same age or older [...]. The face she turned to Avey Johnson was simply bone and a lined yellowish sheeting of skin. Old people who have the essentials to go on forever. (*Praisesong*, 194)

In contrast to these women, who live in accordance with their cultural values and thus can identify with their lives, Thomasina, Clarice, and Avey are physically weakened and marked by alienation from their selves. This leads to both a rejection of individual as well as group identity - "it...don't...pay...to...go...no...place...with...niggers!" (*Praisesong*, 28) This denial of their identity and their refusal to accept the self in the matrix of race, class, gender, and age are linked to an alienation from self and consciousness. While contemplating her past, Avey realizes that the first step towards her loss of cultural identity was the moment she started observing her own body from an outside perspective and comparing it to defined social values. When in pregnancy Avey no longer finds her body attractive, she loses her confidence in her identity. This socially initiated opposition to her own

body leads to an alienation from her self and in consequence from her husband Jay: "Who – *who* – was this untidy swollen woman with the murderous look?" (*Praisesong*, 100) As she rejects her own female form, she envisions her husband having an affair with a woman with an androgynous body. Imagining her husband in a sexual affair with a slim woman, ("*the woman's stomach was flat, smooth, a snow-white plain*"; *Praisesong*, 100) Avey draws a comparison with the act of birth:

Her own legs in the next three or four weeks would find themselves in the same position: raised, bent, open wide. But it would not be that lovely flowering gesture of arousal and invitation. Nor would her cries be those of ecstasy. (*Praisesong*, 101)

These fantasies lead to violent fights between Avey and her husband, who reacts to the unjustified reproaches by giving up the sensual and enjoyable acts they shared, such as dancing and music, in order to achieve success and wealth, and determines his life strictly by rigid and passionless rules, "a harsh and joyless ethic" (*Praisesong*, 131). This leads to a loss of their cultural identity, as they are no longer able to link their African heritage to their American present: "Would it have been possible to have done both?" (*Praisesong*, 139) Having given up the cultural values of their community and now motivated merely by a drive for material success and social mobility, their sexual acts no longer guarantee a self-confident affirmation of self, but rather are seen as a burden. Instead of sexual satisfaction and a feeling of connectedness after their sexual encounters, Avey experiences her loneliness even stronger ("*her body left abandoned*"; *Praisesong*, 129) while her husband's longings and desire are linked to a feeling of bondage evoking associations with slavery:

And at the end his wrenching cry, "Take it from me, Avey! Just take it from me!" Love like a burden he wanted rid of. Like a leg-iron which slowed him in the course he had set for himself. (*Praisesong*, 129)

From the detached perspective of widowhood, Avey can confront her married life and the memories of her husband honestly, and

accept the different components that make up her personality in an understanding of identity in a matrix of race, class, gender, and age.³⁴ Jay/Jerome comes to her in a dream to berate her for wasting so much money by leaving the cruise ship. His return to her in this dream triggers in Avey a host of memories that help her relive their shared lives. Her husband Jay changed his name to Jerome when he started becoming a successful businessman and gave up due to racial and economic pressures the struggle to maintain an individual identity within their cultural community. While contemplating the early years of her marriage, Avey realizes what they both lost in the process of assimilation. Although she longingly remembers the happy times of the early years of their marriage, Avey feels guilty about these memories, describing them as deceit, sin, and addiction. It is, however, a longing she needs to give in to, as it is part of the process of self-purification and the beginning of her return to herself and her heritage: "[T]he memories of that earlier period were a wine she could not resist." (*Praisesong*, 122) Avey finally mourns the loss of the warm, earthy, passionate Jay who, she realizes had died long before the ambitious, cold Jerome. Avey can thus connect to the joyful, energized sex life they had. Waxman, in her article on the importance of Avey's status as widow, emphasizes the aspect of self when juxtaposing Avey's essential self as an exciting means of self-fulfillment with the artificial self that Avey develops as a wife of the successful Jerome:

This pure self markedly contrasts with the cluttered self of the older, proper, middle-class suburban matron, just as her former sensuous pleasure seems alien to the reserved, puritanical widow Avey.³⁵

Only after recognizing her own involvement and guilt at having so easily given up their cultural alliances, can Avey mourn her husband, whom she lost long before his death to false dreams of assimilation and success: "Avey Johnson mourned – not his death so much, but his life." (*Praisesong*, 134) The recognition that she did not make use of offered opportunities and that they wasted their lives in pursuit of false dreams, makes her feel old: "It was bad enough to feel in her bones the old woman she had become hobbling off to her grave." (*Praisesong*, 143) Once on the island, after she has been bathed and

nursed back to health, Avey takes part in the ritual of the out-islanders. At first only a passive observer, she then begins hesitantly and carefully ("she found herself walking amid the elderly folk on the periphery"; *Praisesong*, 247) to join the celebration (the "Big Drum"), witnessing and finally joining the important "Beg Pardon" and the dances. This section brings the novel full circle, as Avey experiences reconciliation with her past, her heritage and, most importantly, with her own self; thus all stages of her life reconcile not only past and present, but make it possible for her to envision a future. In her youth, Avey had defined her identity and self-value merely in conventional attractiveness and could accept her body only according to a conventional norm of beauty, which very soon was called into question by her pregnancy. During the happy moments of their marriage, Avey, as soon as she returned home from work, took off her high-heeled shoes and did her housework bare-footed. While at the beginning of their marriage, Avey's appearances expressed her sexuality ("with her 1940s upsweeps and pompadours and vampish high-heeled shoes"; *Praisesong*, 11), later her appearance denotes social status, wealth, and success: "Everything in good taste and appropriate to her age." (*Praisesong*, 48)

During the ritual dance on the island, Avey can integrate the different perceptions of her physicality and dances in shoes with low heels: "[T]he broad heels of her low-heeled shoes rose slightly." (*Praisesong*, 248) This dance not only connects her to the suppressed and forgotten past, but offers her a perspective of the future, which reconciles the different worlds she has lived in. This is possible only by consciously accepting her own aging: "She had finally after all these decades made it across." (*Praisesong*, 248) Similar to the fact that her being bathed is compared to the bathing of a child but then leads to a sensual act that offers physical satisfaction, this new beginning is compared to birth and childhood but is very clearly connected to age and aging:

Now suddenly, as if she were that girl again, with her entire life yet to live, she felt the threads streaming out from the old people around her [...]. And their brightness as they entered her spoke of possibilities

and becoming even in the face of the bare bones and the burnt-out ends. (*Praisesong*, 249)

This connection to others allows Avey to rediscover her own body and to feel anew her own self, which she believed to have lost over the years. While during the bathing the orgiastic emotions are evoked by the touch of another person, Rosalie Parvay, it is now Avey herself who can make these emotions happen through her own movements and thus the dancing leads to a physical feeling of wellbeing:

And the movement in her hips flowed upward, so that her entire torso was soon swaying. [...] All of her moving suddenly with vigor and passion she hadn't felt in years, and with something of the stylishness and sass she had once been known for. (*Praisesong*, 249)

After this sensual experience of connectedness, Avey is determined to teach her newly gained consciousness to others, in order to overcome what Barbara Frey Waxman has called the "mind-body fragmentation."³⁶ She wants to initiate in others what she had lacked for so many years, in order to preserve her identity: consciousness, protection, memory, and distance. (Cf. *Praisesong*, 139) At the end of the novel, Avey decides to renovate and move to the house she inherited from her great aunt. Each summer she now intends to invite her grandchildren and the students of her youngest daughter Marion, who have the reputation of being difficult, to spend the summer there with her; tyrannically like her great aunt, she will ensure that her demands are met. Like her great aunt she plans to lead the children to the landing place of her ancestors and tell them the story of their past. While in the past, Avey found her "pure self" in the sexual connection to her husband, now in her middle age it is the acceptance of her own physicality enriched by her cultural heritage and the spiritual link to her ancestors which make up her identity. Her "free-agent" status³⁷ as a widow allows this definition.

Among many other things, the novel *Praisesong for a Widow* focuses on a middle-aged woman coming to terms with her life thus far, and now making a radical change in direction for the rest of her life. The need for this change is manifest in physical symptoms as well as in Avey's dreams and anxieties. Avey's journey of reclamation

and remembering leads to her acceptance of her self in an understanding of not only the past of her youth, her present as middle-aged, but also her future in old age. If identity is defined by both continuity and change over the course of life, it is important not only to emphasize the looking back, but also to consider the subject of women growing old. Age and aging will then be seen in the larger context of fundamental human rights for both young and old, women and men, and as a fundamental aspect of the individual's identity. In the context of literary criticism, this approach offers an important extension of a so far neglected subject in American literature and culture. Up until now the focus of literary studies was Leslie Fiedler's thesis that American literature was determined by the myth of a mostly young "hero" who, in order to find truth and meaning, confronts himself in the conflict with the forces of nature.³⁸ If the young hero stands for the particular intellectual disputes, departures and crises of American culture, as Arno Heller states in his treatise of the American adolescent novel,³⁹ then the same cultural significance can be attributed to the characters of aging women in American literature. The special perspective of women, determined by race, class, gender, and age, allows us to draw conclusions about the ongoing cultural narrative of personal identity in American culture; for American studies it offers a new approach to American literature.

Notes

¹ Cf. Carol Pearson, Katherine Pope. *The Female Hero in American and British Literature*. New York: Bowker, 1981, 8.

² Ibid, 80.

³ Cf. Lynn Bothelo, Pat Thane. "Introduction." *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson, 2001, 3.

⁴ Cf. Bothelo, Thane, 3.

⁵ Cf. Ann Kibbery, "Identity." *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*. Eds. Cathy N. Davidson, Linda Wagner-Martin. New York: Oxford UP, 1995, 413.

⁶ Cf. Sharon R. Kaufman. *The Ageless Self. Sources of Meaning in Late Life*. Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1986.

⁷ Susan Koppelman Cornillon. Ed. *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1972.

⁸ Nina Baym. *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978, 14.

⁹ Cf. Roberta Maierhofer. *Salty Old Women: Eine anokritische Untersuchung zu Frauen, Altern und Identität in der amerikanischen Literatur*. Arbeiten zur Amerikanistik. Essen: Blaue Eule, 2003.

¹⁰ Cf. Kibbery, 413.

¹¹ Richard Newman quoted in Philippe Wamba. "Black Autobiographies: Powerful Statements of Self."

http://www.africana.com/DailyArticles/index_19990912.htm

¹² Cf. Elaine Showalter. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness." *The New Feminist Criticism. Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon, 1985, 243-270.

¹³ Cf. Germaine Greer. *The Change. Women, Aging and the Menopause*. New York: Knopf, 1992, 4.

¹⁴ Margaret Morganroth Gullette. *Declining to Decline. Cultural Combat and the Politics of the Middle*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1997, 6-7.

¹⁵ The distinction between "age studies" (understanding how differences are produced by discursive formations, social practices, and material conditions) and "aging studies" (understanding old and middle age as a continuum of a discourse on age itself that includes all stages of life) is often blurred.

¹⁶ Paule Marshall. *Praisesong for the Widow*. New York: Plume, 1983.

¹⁷ Cf. Helena Michie. "Body and Health." *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*. Eds. Cathy N. Davidson, Linda Wagner-Martin. New York: Oxford UP, 1995, 127.

¹⁸ Nancy K. Miller. "The Marks of Time." *Figuring Age. Women, Bodies, Generations*. Kathleen Woodward. Ed. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999, 4.

¹⁹ Cf. Mary Douglas. *Natural Symbols*. New York: Pantheon, 1982 and *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge, 1966.

²⁰ Cf. Keith A. Sandiford. "Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*: The Reluctant Heiress, or Whose Life Is It Anyway?" *Black American Literature Forum* 20.4 (Winter 1986): 390.

²¹ Missy Dehn Kubitschek. "Paule Marshall's Women on Quest." *Black American Literature Forum* 21.1/2 (Spring/Summer 1987): 44.

²² Cf. Gay Wilentz. "Towards a Spiritual Middle Passage Back: Paule Marshall's Diasporic Vision in *Praisesong for the Widow*." *Obsidian* II. 5/3 (Winter 1990): 2.

²³ Cf. Giulia Scarpa. "Couldn't They Have Done Differently? Caught in the Web of Race, Gender, and Class: Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*." *World Literature Written in English* 29.2 (August 1989): 94.

²⁴ Velma Pollard. "Cultural Connections in Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*." *World Literature Written in English* 25.2 (August 1985): 285.

²⁵ Cf. Angelita Reyes. "Politics and Metaphors of Materialism in Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* and Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*." *Politics and the Muse: Studies in the Politics of Recent American Literature*. Ed. Adam J. Sorkin. Bowling Green: State U Popular Press, 1989, 186f.

²⁶ Reyes, 189.

²⁷ Linda Pannill. "From the Wordshop: The Fiction of Paule Marshall." *MELUS* 12.2 (Summer 1985): 63-73.

²⁸ Cf. Pannill, 71.

²⁹ Cf. Barbara Frey Waxman. *From the Hearth to the Open Road. A Feminist Study of Aging in Contemporary Literature*. New York: Greenwood, 1990, 126.

³⁰ Cf. Pannill, 71.

³¹ Cf. Melody Graulich, Lisa Sisco. "Meditations on Language and the Self: A Conversation With Paule Marshall." *NWSA Journal* 4.3 (Fall 1992): 293.

³² Graulich, Sisco, 295.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Cf. Barbara Frey Waxman. "The Widow's Journey to Self and Roots: Aging and Society in Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*." *Frontiers* 9.3 (1987): 96.

³⁵ Cf. Waxman. "The Widow's Journey to Self and Roots," 96.

³⁶ Waxman, *From the Hearth to the Open Road*, 121.

³⁷ Cf. Waxman. "The Widow's Journey to Self and Roots," 97.

³⁸ Cf. Leslie Fiedler. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Criterion Books, 1960.

³⁹ Cf. Arno Heller. *Odysee zum Selbst. Zur Gestaltung jugendlicher Identitätssuche im neueren amerikanischen Roman*. Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft. Innsbruck: Gesellschaft zur Pflege der Geisteswissenschaften, 1973, 11.

Our Country and Our Culture?
Immediate Experience vs. Un-American Ideologies from
Warshow to Hitchens

Berndt Ostendorf

My point of departure is the coincidence of Christopher Hitchens' spectacular exit from *The Nation* on ideological grounds and the reissue of Robert Warshow's *The Immediate Experience*. Both of these events converged (rather than just happened) at the first anniversary of September 11, 2001. With Biermösl Blosn one could ask "Wie reimt sich das zusammen?" The larger, political force field that choreographs these events into a historical pattern is defined by the following problematic: The classic British or American Left was deeply affected and virtually silenced by the moral repercussions of 9/11.¹ Yet the ideological implosion that followed in its wake is by no means new in American history. While the immediate cause for Christopher Hitchens' conversion to just wars may well have been the sudden eruption of El-Quaida terrorism, there is a family resemblance between his ideological turn and the defection of the first generation of the old New York Left from the Communist party during the Forties and Fifties after the full disclosures of Stalinist terror. Such sudden, moral recognition of *ideological* evil and its incompatibility with the *immediate* benefit of being-in-America, seems to spread epidemically at crucial moments in US history. It is the objective correlative to the born-again experience: An epiphany caused by the immediate experience of certain American, non-negotiable fundamentals. After 1945 the sudden lack of faith in the "God that failed" lent legitimation to the Cold War, to the defense of the American system and to the rigorous Anti-Stalinism of the first generation of ex-leftists. What about the conversion of the second generation "neocons" after the Sixties? They reacted to the excesses of the multicultural or postmodern "perversions" of liberalism engineered by the *New Left*, perversions deemed Un-American.² When contemplating these born-again moments in the autobiographical writings of the authors under review one thing stands out: The role of George Orwell in providing the script for a moral de-

fense of these drastic transatlantic conversions.³ The trajectory runs from a former belief in rigid orthodoxies to an immediate, almost libertarian experience of America. An excess of free exercise follows an excess of orthodox establishment. But there is another, larger context which buttresses these patriotic homecomings. Over all these just-in-time-conversions hovers a world historical anxiety formulated by Immanuel Wallerstein: Whether the "long Social Democratic century has now come to an end?" Hence these conversions form part of a "*histoire de longue durée*" whose slow-working effects would hardly be noticed if they were not perforated at certain intervals by the brutal shocks of recognition of an "*histoire événementielle*" - such as 9/11.

Europeans might want to argue that the U.S. never had a truly *social* democracy. True enough. In the U.S., the shift marks the end or the final demolition of the New Deal, or it focuses on the larger question whether the New Deal represented the fulfilment of or a departure from the true American creed? Old liberals, neo-conservatives, old or new or postmodern leftist are deeply divided over this question. As a consequence of such meta-squabbles there is today much ideological confusion in the US; the older party-political divisions into "liberal" and "conservative" have become meaningless to be supplanted by as yet to be determined ideological markers. But some sort of binary division remains in place. Are we, as some pundits suggest, already in a post-ideological, transnational age, a massive realignment that has made the classical ideological sign posts obsolete?⁴ Or conversely: Does the noticeable shift of US policy from multilateralism to unilateral exceptionalism, which has effected a change from a balance-of-power to hot, activist wars, indicate a homecoming to the immediate experience of a new isolationist nationalism?⁵

The first edition of *The Immediate Experience* was published by Doubleday in 1962, seven years after Robert Warshow's death of a heart attack at age 37.⁶ It collected the articles he had written between 1946 to 1955 for *The Nation*, *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*. Though the book won some critical acclaim, "it didn't go over big in Kansas," as the current music critic of *Commentary*, Terry Teachout, wryly puts it.⁷ Yet, in a practical or bibliographical sense, *The Imme-*

diate Experience has always been around. My own copy of a 1970 paperback edition lists four previous printings, and I am sure there were more between then and now. Terry Teachout has an explanation for the selective national reception: "The only people likely to know his name were ageing neoconservatives and abnormally well-read film buffs," and these two groups did not attend the same agenda setting parties in New York. The devotion of film buffs is easily explained. They have held Warshow in high esteem for setting up exacting standards for a new film criticism that, much later, was most admirably represented by Pauline Kael in the pages of the *New Yorker*. Interestingly, the *New Yorker* had hired Warshow just a few days before his untimely death. If the film buffs appropriated him as a founding father of film criticism, how good was his cultural criticism or his *Ideologiekritik*? A quick search through several cultural histories of New York and its intellectual scene held a surprise for me. There was hardly any appreciation of Warshow's impact as a cultural critic, with one exception. Norman Podhoretz, who succeeded Warshow as editor at *Commentary*, claims him as his mentor, inspiration and guide. Indeed, Podhoretz' book *Making It*, a document of unashamed self-promotion, improves instantly when one reads it as a *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Warshow within the context of the New York Jewish intelligentsia. To wit, Podhoretz' enthusiastic endorsement has not helped Warshow's reputation during the sixties and seventies, certainly not among cultural critics on the Left.⁸ It is wise therefore that the current reissue is sandwiched between two appreciations from film buffs, the first by David Denby, film critic of the *New Yorker*, the second by Stanley Cavell, who has instrumentalized popular film for the teaching of philosophy at Harvard. The latter calls it "one of those books whose discovery, early or late, can create so specific a feeling of personal gratitude for its existence that it is almost a surprise to learn that others know how good it is." Thus immunized against a current misreading, the expanded and contextualized reissue invites today's readers to test whether such praise is warranted, not only for the articles on the gangster film and the Western, but also for his lesser known essays on the legacy of the thirties, on his father's socialism, on the idealism of the Rosenbergs, on the self-image of the *New Yorker*, and on the corrupt-

ing effect of comic books on children. As a lagniappe, the editors have added eight unpublished essays on Hemingway, Stein, and Kafka.

Warshow came of age in the late 1930s and early 1940s and entered the New York arena as a late member of the second generation of Jewish intellectuals. The first generation included Lionel Trilling, Philip Rahv, Sidney Hook, Hannah Arendt, and William Phillips. Following closely and closing ranks were Alfred Kazin, Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, Richard Hofstadter and Delmore Schwartz. They wrote for journals such as *Menorah Journal*, *The New Masses*, *The Nation* and *Partisan Review*. Warshow belonged to the next cohort that comprised Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, Irving Howe, Melvin Lasky, Nathan Glazer, and Seymour Martin Lipset. Meanwhile, most surviving members of this last group have outed themselves, quite cheerfully, as neoconservatives. They were involved with *Commentary*, *Dissent*, *The Public Interest*, and *Encounter*, journals initially associated with the Left that later gravitated towards a more conservative reassessment of America's role in the (cold) world. (When the scandal broke that the CIA had been secretly funding *Encounter Magazine*, the journal had already become "conservative" in its foreign policy while remaining high modernist in its cultural preferences, thus foreshadowing the neoconservative realignment.) Warshow's contribution makes most sense within the evolving interaction of these successive intellectual cohorts and the dialectic of their ideological battles.

What were the key issues, Marxists would have said "contradictions", which shaped his own experience and honed his criticism? First, his Jewish identity was caught between an older Judaism-as-Socialism and the growing disclosures of the Gulag and Holocaust. After the creation of Israel, a residual or latent Zionism strengthened the "particular" Jewish as against an "internationalist" identity. Secondly, as the crimes of Stalinism filtered into public consciousness, the earlier utopia of "communism as a better Americanism" collapsed; thirdly, the classic Jewish allegiance to a European enlightenment tradition and its attendant aesthetic modernism took an American turn and, thus nostrified, became a powerful engine that turned New York into the center of innovation and the avant-garde capital of the world.

It involved a new attitude towards all things American. Previously, Jewish partiality towards the enlightenment had implied a commitment to European high culture and a rejection of all "commodified" American popular culture including jazz, popular music, film and advertising. Under the aegis of Marxism, mass culture was diagnosed as an instrument of monopoly capitalism designed to keep an as yet unrealized America from materializing. The crass American mass culture that enveloped them everywhere had to be avoided and fought at all costs. But then the War changed the American political and cultural self-image. Now the question of loyalty to the real-existing America and its victorious democratic culture became a growing concern. All these conflicting motives have to be contextualized within the widening gyres of a public sphere dominated by McCarthyism and the Cold War.

Whatever the choice, Socialism or America - given the New York setting, a break with the immigrant past seemed unavoidable. Let's leave the ghettos of our fathers and join internationalist cosmopolitanism!⁹ This exit from a particular ghetto Judaism to a cosmopolitan, New York universalism was paired with a sense of gratitude towards America, particularly as America's war-time role concerning the Holocaust or the Gulag was coming into full view. But now the discovery and recognition of the American endowment (what in soccer is known as *Heimvorteil*) had to be brought in line with the normative dictates of high European modernism. How could Jewishness, cosmopolitanism, high universal literature and low (American) public culture be reconciled? This was the abiding theme not only of Warshow, but also of Elliot Cohen, Saul Bellow and Leslie Fiedler, whose later essay on "bridging the gap" stands in this healing tradition. Then there was an ego-centered push factor. Leaving the ghetto and "making it in Manhattan" added a personal motif, that of the killing of fathers. As Podhoretz quipped: The longer trip was not from Eastern Europe to New York, but from Brooklyn to Manhattan. Warshow took on his Jewish father Trilling and the goyishe New Critics at the same time. With a stab at Trilling's novel *The Middle of the Journey*, Warshow wryly points out that you cannot build a literature on irony (or ambiguity and paradox) alone. Warshow's rigorous critique hurt Trill-

ing. Nonetheless, he would later write the introduction of Warshow's book, and his introduction still shows the pain inflicted by the kinsman. What would explain the internecine quality of relationships between the age cohorts? William Phillips, editor of *Partisan Review*, finds the answer in the difference between goyish and Jewish critical schools: The New Critics all praised and promoted each other, while the Jewish New York intellectuals tore each other apart. But therein lay their and Warshow's future strength. Though these cohorts made each other's lives miserable and though they drove each other to early death, depression and suicide, this infighting over cultural meanings was good rhetorical training for a new urban universe of discourse bent on defending contested turfs and on revisionist agenda setting. It also prepared them for a paradigm shift from politics to culture which has only now run its full course.¹⁰ As a consequence, the New York Jewish intellectuals learned to excel in defining *cultural* difference. Most of all, they forged a successful new alliance between avant-garde modernism in the arts and the American urban vernacular, an affinity to which they gave a new patriotic spin. And while they were at it they also managed, as Serge Guilbaut complained, to steal the avant-garde momentum away from Paris. This "homecoming" put New York on the agenda as a cultural capital, with the "New York intellectuals" as gate keepers and agenda setters. But there was a price. It required a sloughing off or at least a growing residualization of their older internationalist radicalism in politics. We catch Warshow at an early stage in this Americanizing trajectory. In due time most of the former Stalinists became fierce anti-Stalinists. Some turned into mellow New Deal socialists, and some into hardnosed conservatives - both neo and bronto. After this first wave, a second wave reacted to the sixties by making a (neo)conservative turn and becoming American patriots who now believed in American exceptionalism or, more to the right, in its birthright to a new politics of empire.

We are talking about an Americanization of the dialectics of Jewish enlightenment on the one hand, and about an *Aufhebung* of a painful Jewish-American double consciousness into an American exceptionalism on the other: "*Our country and our culture*" the *Partisan Review* named their symposium of 1952 to the surprise of many old

Leftists.¹¹ The adjective signalled a significant proprietary turn. For until then a strong European orientation had prevailed among Jewish intellectuals: "They did not feel that they belonged to America or that America belonged to them," Podhoretz muses about his peers. With the benefit of hindsight I would add a cautious "yet". Alienation may have been the first attitude of choice in the new urban cultural scene, and the feeling itself carried a European *haut gout*. Yet, at the same time everyone craved recognition by the literate American public market: *Making it*, preferably at the goyishe *New Yorker*, as Podhoretz readily admits. Or making it by writing the *American* novel, as Bellow or Mailer did. Though Warshow was too young to be asked for his opinion at the symposium, his later articles helped to give shape to an Americanocentric turn. The turn was energized from the bottom up, a veritable "trickle-up" phenomenon; in his case ushered in by the many clandestine moviegoers among all these high-toned intellectuals. With a bad conscience these high cultural modernists were watching typical Hollywood products. At this moment Trilling prompted from backstage: Was not the real America *relatively* better than any not yet realized socialist utopias? Was it not in fact better than Stalinist Russia with all its terrors? Was not Tocqueville *more interesting* than Marx? As a consequence, an anthropologically motivated interest in a "national character" and in its vernacular components such as baseball, comics, film began to emerge, compared to which some of the "high" concerns, say of the New Criticism, seemed spurious and less interesting, certainly libidinally speaking. This nostrification of the vernacular implies a tacit acknowledgment that the previous denial of an "undeniably American reality" (cf. Trilling's *Liberal Imagination*) had included elements of a basically "un-American" attitude. Clearly, the Eurocentrism of Marxist paradigms seemed artificial, if not "alien" when compared to Humphrey Bogart's pithy asides or Clark Gable's poise or Pogo's wit.¹² The mastermind behind Warshow's reversal may have been Elliot Cohen – first editor of *Commentary*, who was interested in the interrelation between the commonplace and high, a backstage popularizer if there ever was one. His advice to Warshow: Let's leave *Partisan Review* to the producers of culture, and reserve *Commentary* for the consumers, and as customers let's embrace America,

not only as it ought to be, but as it is. How did Bellow's ethnic protagonist Augie March announce his fall into the US-quotidian: I am an American, Chicago-born.

Another point is important. The Jewish quest for enlightenment was shot through with Weber's promise of an inevitable disenchantment and secularization as a consequence of modernization. This sat well with Abraham Cahan's notion that acculturation, constituting both a loss and a gain, left behind a long line of "defeated victors." This recognition of progress-as-loss added a gout of world-wariness to being an intellectual Jew on the make. Hemingway's advice, "turn on the shit-detector," had fallen on open ears. It strengthened an emerging Nietzschean scepticism *vis a vis* all metaphysical grand designs and paired it with an Old Testament craving for honesty and truth. This tall and complex order took its toll in personal crises, depressions, early death and suicides. Young Warshow for one found in writing "a happiness wrung from all the unhappiness associated with modern life, modern history, modern art". The coming therapeutic shift, that Philip Rieff heralded, moved from the ruling paradigm of pre-war depression to post-war affirmation:¹³ What their fathers found depressing about America (and what the real Depression merely confirmed), the young rebels – after Freud - found admirable and worthy of "high" criticism. This motif adds a Benjaminian quality to Warshow's writing that Stanley Cavell comments on in his afterword.

According to Warshow, Stalinism had given socialism a bad name and turned it into a moral disaster. For the older generation of Jews, best represented by Abraham Cahan, socialism had been the secular extension of Judaism. Yiddishkeit and socialism were virtually identical. This elective affinity shipwrecked on the disclosures of Stalinism. Warshow chimes in with a rigorous attack on Stalinist ideology and with an obituary to his socialist father, who had immigrated from the Pale to become a Jewish businessman. At the time of his death his father appears to him as a "defeated victor", Cahan's term for the successfully acculturated Jews who had gained their material place in America but lost both Judaic traditions and socialist illusions. What may surprise current readers is the livid passion with which Warshow deconstructs the false promises and aporias of Stalinism. Indeed, here

he is at his rhetorical best. No wonder the current neocons love it. In his view the red decade, the popular front, and Stalinist intellectuality were an aberration and a failure of authenticity – represented by the false consciousness of second-rate propaganda pushers such as John Steinbeck, Lilian Hellman and Arthur Miller, all deeply involved with the Red Decade and the New Deal. Yet, Warshow soon found out to his chagrin that such anti-Stalinist deconstruction called in false friends: HUAC and J. Edgar Hoover. Now the question arose, which fight was more urgent? Against Stalinism or against McCarthyism? Were not the erstwhile Stalinists whom Warshow attacked with such ferocity now victims of McCarthyism? By and by the New York intellectuals found themselves in a moral and political dilemma which caused a certain bleakness of outlook. There was literally no place to go - but home to New York as an urban and cultural space of immediate experience.

We witness a formerly left wing anti-Communist on his way to becoming a neo-conservative exceptionalist. When Warshow directs his ire chiefly against the moral and intellectual inauthenticity of Stalinist orthodoxies he stands in the tradition of George Orwell, whose rhetorical criticism honed his rigorous *Ideologiekritik*. Like him, Warshow comes through as a searcher for truth who is sceptical of all "grand narratives" long before such a position became orthodox. Warshow was *unzeitgemäß* in the best sense of that word. He endorses Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical scepticism, his injunction to take nothing for granted, but to trust experience provided it is finely honed and well-argued. He summarizes his attitude to the Red Decade and its aftermath as follows:

In the 1930s radicalism entered upon an age of organized mass disingenuousness, when every act and every idea had behind some 'larger consideration' which destroyed its honesty and its meaning. Everyone became a professional politician, acting within a framework of 'realism' that tended to make political activity an end in itself. The half-truth was elevated to the position of a principle, and in the end the half-truth, in itself became more desirable than the whole truth.... The whole level of thought and discussion, the level of culture itself, had been lowered.... 'The Grapes of Wrath' was a great novel. Eventually,

'Confessions of a 'Nazi Spy' was a serious movie and 'Ballad for Americans' was an inspired song. The mass culture of the educated classes - the culture of the 'middle-brow,' as it has sometimes been called - had come into existence.

In commenting upon the Rosenbergs, he becomes positively acerbic:

Whether he cheers the Yankees or the Dodgers, whether he damns Franklin Roosevelt as a warmonger or adores him as the champion of human rights, the Communist is always celebrating the same thing: the great empty Idea which has taken on the outlines of his personality. Communists are still 'idealists' - perhaps all the more so because their "idealism" is by now almost entirely without content - and the surprising degree of sympathy and even respect that they can command among liberals is partly to be explained by the liberal belief that "idealism" in itself is a virtue."

David Denby comments:

"The horror of American Stalinism, he says again and again, is that it prevents its adherents from having any kind of direct and *honest relationship to experiences*.... The culture that resulted from this effort - a spreading rot of liberal middle-brow kitsch - was also prevented by will and by habit from knowing that it was lying." (my emphasis, xvii).

Warshow's opposition to McCarthyism is taken more or less for granted. But his strictures remain rhetorically vague, whereas his attacks on Stalinism are most explicit and much more passionate - they after all constitute and define his *immediate* experience. One of the rhetorically most brilliant pieces is a vicious *explication de texts* of the letters that the Rosenbergs sent each other in prison. The problem is that "a direct and honest relationship" or the "quest for authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) have always been the ideological commonplace of the reaction, and thus Warshow's reputation may best be entrusted to the care of current neocons.

Where does "the immediate experience" as expressed in Warshow's writing come from? In Henry James' *Ambassadors* (Warshow's favorite novelist), Lambert Strether gives advice to a young American artist: Throw open the doors of desire to experience. Instead of following the dictates of "assigned taste" or of "grand designs" and "alien notions" of political correctness, follow your immediate experience. This Jamesian pragmatic advice to follow "the antennae of his race" seems to run through Warshow's book. Within the long dialectic sweep of Jewish emancipation, the years of Warshow's oeuvre mark the final graduation into vernacular America, an *Aufhebung* of Jewish-American double consciousness into cultural patriotism. But there is nothing "Jacksonian" about this acceptance of the vernacular. Warshow's conversion does not endorse the Bowling Green crowd of popular culture advocates who cannot claim him as one of theirs. Here is Warshow:

I have had enough serious interest in the products of the 'higher' arts to be very sharply aware that the impulse which leads me to a Humphrey Bogart movie has little in common with the impulse which leads me to the novels of Henry James or the poetry of T.S. Eliot. That there is a connection between the two impulses I do not doubt, but the connection is not adequately summed up in the statement that the Bogart movie and the Eliot poem are both forms of art. To define that connection seems to me one of the tasks of film criticism, and the definition must be first of all a personal one. A man watches a movie, and the critic must acknowledge that he is that man.

The moviegoer Warshow no longer makes any excuses for his "immediate" taste "as a man," nor does he necessarily suffer from a split personality when he appreciates both James and the comics "as a critic." He may bridge the gap by maintaining rigorous standards in the critical appreciation of such cultural differences. Trummy Young defined this pragmatic turn in a popular song of the day: "Tain't what you do it's the way that cha do it."

In 1953 a mathematician named Lehrer measured reputations, albeit of elements, by their distance from Harvard: "[T]hese are the only ones of which the news has come to Havard, there may be many

more but they haven't been discavard." It will please the growing majority of neocons that the news of Warshow's worth as a cultural critic has finally come to Havard. Why reissue him in the age of George Will and George W. Bush? Could it be that in the age of the new American patriotism Warshow has become timely and acceptable to a degree he never was before?

Christopher Hitchens and Alexander Cockburn, British expat radicals in Washington D.C., were regular contributors to *The Nation*. Hitchens had started his ideological journey on the far left in Britain: "The group I was a member of, International Socialists, was a dissident splinter of the Trotskyist movement..."¹⁴ Thus he started out as a radical splinter within a splinter group, which speaks for a certain non-dogmatic contrariness that maintains a flirting relationship with the libertarian creed. In a bombshell article in the *Washington Post* of October 21, 2002, pointedly entitled "So Long Fellow Travelers," he turned in his membership ticket to the American Left over the question of whether America should go to war against Iraq or not. *The Nation* had asked its readers to comment on how 9/11 had changed their lives and how they felt about a war. Hitchens, long time author of the magazine's "Minority Report," read these responses with growing dismay: One reader called the war flawed and self-serving, another praised the terrorist attack for weakening the "loony" system over which George Bush presided. Hitchens had enough of this: "It may now seem trite to say that September 11 and other confrontations ,changed everything.' For me, it didn't so much change everything as reinforce something. I am against aggressive totalitarian states and I am resolutely opposed to religious fanaticism." And shifting into an Orwellian righteousness: "I am also sickened by any attempt to call these hideous things by other names." In his usual hyperbolic fashion he complained that *The Nation* had become the "echo chamber of those who truly believe that John Ashcroft is a greater menace than Osama bin Laden..." He puts his conversion into a nutshell: "September 11 effected a confrontation between everything I like and everything I don't like." In short, his reactions had become more "immediate" and "honest" - but also more simplistic and Manichean. He mutated from an outer-directed ideologue to an inner-directed

moral agency. The time had come, he explains his move, to defend our civil society against the Bin Ladens and Husseins and thus to suppress any nostalgia for Stalinism. He accuses the current left for "a sort of affectless, neutralist, smirking isolationism." His long-time colleague, compatriot and fellow author at the *Nation*, Alexander Cockburn, commented this neoconservative conversion as follows:

I suppose Hitch's departure has been inevitable ever since the Weekly Standard said he was more important than George Orwell... I think it was becoming increasingly bizarre for the Nation to publish his column. But people only very slowly take in these changes, much like Dorian Gray changes slowly in front of you. Hitch is no longer the beautiful slender young man of the Left. Now he's just another middle aged porker of the Right.¹⁵

During the Reagan years, Jack McCarthy recalls, two defectors from Leftism, David Horowitz and Peter Collier had mobilized "Lefties for Reagan" with some success.¹⁶ In Hitchen's case a wave of abuse came his way, not only from the old left who reacted like a rejected lover, but also from the anti-war Right associated with Pat Buchanan on the one hand and the group of conservative multilateralists around Brent Scowcroft, Eagleburger and Kissinger. Justin Raimondo makes the connection to the previous neoconservative defections from the Left. He identifies Hitchens as the latest in a long line of erstwhile Trotskyists to sign up with the War Party: "We are witnessing the birth of yet another neoconservative literary celebrity. He's less boring than Norman Podhoretz (but then again who isn't), and a lot more photogenic than Irving Kristol." But he remains a "humanitarian with a guillotine" who "is about 30 years too late: the neoconservatives beat him to it."¹⁷ In short, the diverse factions of the Right do not exactly welcome the former hatchet man of the Left into their trenches. William Buckley dressed him down for having called Kissinger a "one man rolling crime wave." Excommunicated by the orthodox Left and Right, he has thrown his lot in with George Orwell, who is the subject of his last book *Why Orwell Matters* (Basic Books): "I feel emancipated by the lack of any party or ideological allegiance." There is a touch of libertarian contrariness in his new won freedom from all

constraints. Yet, he remains *ideologiekritisch* overdetermined: For his radicalism now boils down to a hatred of falseness and fraud, whatever that may be. In his view Mother Theresa was such a fraud. When Edward Lempinen pointed out the contradiction of now being allied with Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton and other hawks, he admitted his discomfort that sometimes the wrong people are for a "just" war. Similar to Warshow forty years earlier, he remains somewhat critical of the Right, but he reserves most of his animus for the Left. It may have to do with the overdetermination of the convert. Hitchens blames it on the evaporation of Left and Right and on a massive paradigm shift in the meaning of politics. Lampinen comments: "[I]t is fair to say that he sees in the left's reaction to Sept. 11 a failure to understand a profound change in world relations – a failure that makes the left irrelevant. The old political conflicts – and the old paradigm of opposition – are largely fading and they've been replaced by a global conflict of theocratic states or movements against secular states. The conflict between God and reason...." At this juncture Hitchens chimes in: "The term, 'the American left' is as near to being meaningless or nonsensical as any term could really be in politics... It isn't really a force in politics anymore. And it would do well to ask itself why that is." This belief in the demise of the national or global Left is matched and mirrored by former SDS-radicals in Germany who are now neo-Nazi activists. Horst Mahler, Reinhard Oberlechner, Bernd Rabehl argue for a new division of the political force field and moved to the immediate experience of an older German patriotism.¹⁸ Now that the end of the social democratic century is near and the old division of Left and Right are outdated, the political playing field has new parameters. Hitchens says it is a matter of opposition between fundamentalists vs. secularists, between theocratic aggression vs. civil society. This is instantly confusing since Saddam, the theocratic aggressor in his scenario, is a secularist and John Ashcroft, the defender of American civil society, is a card-carrying, born-again fundamentalist. When Hitchens writes "it creates an international feeling that there has to be a stand made against the worst kind of tyranny that there ever could be, which is religious, the one that the socialist movement came into being to oppose, the

religious worldview....," he should arguably be worried about the increasing power of the Christian Right in the U.S. and its global reach through myriad mission projects in Asia, Africa and South America. More in line with the reaction is the division into cosmopolitans and locals, or into globalists vs. localists. This extends into Pat Buchanan-like unilateral isolationists and Scowcroft-like multilateralists and defenders of the status quo in the Near East. A very easy marker is the division into patriots and disloyal citizens, a favorite ploy of populist politics. Hitchens accuses the Left of an inversion of patriotism into a masochistic defense of the Other while trotting out Hussein as an Anti-Imperialist. Ideological confusion reigns in this debate as never before. It is indeed odd that Alexander Cockburn, clearly the more aggressive of the two, was asked to do OpEd pieces for the *Wall Street Journal*. Hitchens is particularly vague and confused about Israel and the Palestinians. It is difficult for him to get his personal ducks into a line that would make ideological sense: "I am an Anti-Zionist. I'm one of those people of Jewish descent who believes that Zionism would be a mistake even if there were no Palestinians." Outing himself as Jewish may be incidental, but it may also be telling. It is interesting that Hitchens continues to berate the US government for egregious errors in its Israeli politics, yet he staunchly defends Sharon's war plans against Saddam. Is this a way of having your Zionist cake and eating it?

What explains Hitchen's and Cockburn's position in the new American political scene? William Keach, a Socialist who remained in Britain, assigns them a very special place in America: "[They] delight in their roles as rogue journalists, as displaced mavericks from Britain who are allowed to entertain as well as inform and provoke their readers by taking a caustic look at a ruling class more than confident enough.... to tolerate such "freedom of the press."¹⁹ A libertarian and radical loose cannon?²⁰ After parting with *The Nation* Hitchens found a new and more accomodating home in *Vanity Fair*. Pilgrim's progress?

Notes

¹ See Ron Rosenbaum. "Goodbye, All That: How Left Idiocies Drove Me to Flee." New York Observer, Oct. 14, 2002, p.1.

² A typical neocon reaction is by Alan Wolfe: *Anti-American Studies*, in: *The New Republic Online*, 30.1. 2003: <http://www.tnr.com/docprint.mhtml/?i=20030210&s=wolfe021003>

³ On Orwell's anti-communism: Timothy Garton Ash, "Orwell's List," *The New York Review of Books*, Sept.25, 2003, 6-11.

⁴ B. Ostendorf "Transnationalism or the Fading of Borders." *Transnationalism: The Fading of Borders in the Western Hemisphere*. Berndt Ostendorf Hg. Heidelberg: Winter Verlag 2002, 1-21. Typically, Hitchens conflates and reduces the question of Right and Left to Anti-Americanisms: "Anti-Americanism. Varieties of right and left, foreign and domestic." *Slate* (fighting words. A wartime lexicon), November 27, 2002. <http://slate.msn.com/?id=2074645&device=>

⁵ B. Ostendorf "Die Rolle der Religion in der amerikanischen Politik und Gesellschaft" *Amerika - Fremder Freund*. Hg. Dietmar Herz, Wolfgang Bergsdorf, Hans Hoffmeister, Wolf Wagner. Weimar: Rhino Verlag 2003, 157-183 .

⁶ Warshow, Robert. *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and Other Aspects of Popular Culture*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001.

⁷ "The Experience of America. Robert Warshow, the man who did pop culture right." *The Weekly Standard*, Vol 7, issue 27, 03/25, 2002. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/content/public/articles/000/000/001/014offwi.asp>

⁸ Podhoretz. "The Family Tree" *Making It* New York: Random House 1967. Alexander Bloom. *Prodigal Sons. The New York Intellectuals & their World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1986 also treats Warshow extensively, but other works hardly mention him.

⁹ Much later Irving Howe would evoke that loss nostalgically in *World of Our Fathers*. New York: Touchstone 1976

¹⁰ See B. Ostendorf. "Cultural Studies: Post-Political Theory in a Post-Fordist Public Sphere", *Amerikastudien* 40.4 (1995), 709-724.

¹¹ *Partisan Review*. *America and the Intellectuals* PR Series No. 4 (1953)

¹² The status of comic strips amongst intellectuals is telling. The favorite cartoon of the thinking class was Pogo, the possum from Okefenokee Swamp who was highly sophisticated in the humorous appropriation of the political excesses of McCarthyism. See my "Political Animals in Cold War America: Pogo, Churchy La Femme, Simple J. Malarkey and Molester Mole define what it means to be a liberal American." Forthcoming.

¹³ Philip Rieff. *The Triumph of the Therapeutic. Uses of Faith after Freud*. New York: Harper Torchbooks. 1966

¹⁴ Edward W. Lempinen. "The Left's Odd Man Out" Salon.com, October 31, 2002.

¹⁵ Lloyd Grove. "Christopher Hitchens Quits the Nation." Washington Post, Thursday, Sept. 26, 2002, C03.

¹⁶ Jack McCarthy. "Letter to a Lying, Self-Serving, Fat-Assed, Chain Smoking, Drunken, Opportunistic, Cynical Contrarian (AKA C. Hitchens) Oct. 22, 2002". Counterpunch, edited by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair. www.counterpunch.org/mccarthy1022.html.

¹⁷ Justin Raimondo. "Christopher Hitchens, Neocon. He is the latest in a long line of erstwhile Trotskyists to sign up with the War Party." <http://www.antiwar.com/justin/j082602.html>.

¹⁸ Berndt Ostendorf. "Antiamerikanismus von Rechts? Zum Anschwellen des Antiliberalismus im Zeitalter der Globalisierung." Deutsch-amerikanische Begegnungen. Konflikt und Kooperation im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Frank Trommler, ed. Stuttgart-München: DVA 2001.

¹⁹ William Keach. "In Perspective: Alexander Cockburn and Christopher Hitchens." International Socialism, (Quarterly Journal of the Socialist Workers Party, Britain) 79, March 1998. Stefan Collini, "'No Bullshit' Bullshit", London Review of Books, 23 Jan 2003, 3-6. See also Ron Rosenbaum. "Goodbye..." footnote 1.

²⁰ Rhys Southan. "Free Radical: Journalist Christopher Hitchens explains why he's no longer a socialist..." Reasononline, November 2001: <http://reason.com/0111/fe.rs.free.shtml>.

From Model Minority to Model Masculinity: The Globalization of the CaucAsian

Klaus Rieser and Susanne Rieser

Race and gender relations have been deeply challenged by globalization and by the feminist project. We witness a growing dynamics in racial relations, but still a white hegemony. At the same time, we witness a greater polyvalence of masculinities, but still a male hegemony. Such a metamorphosis of race and gender relation will be traced through the example of a transposition from Hong Kong to Hollywood, namely the "Americanization" of an Asian subject in the example of *Rush Hour*. The Jackie Chan/Chris Tucker vehicle *Rush Hour* (1998) was the first film to introduce the Asian and African American buddy formula into Hollywood mainstream. The teaming up of Asian (sensitive) and African American (exuberant) masculinities allows for an interesting reading of how a successful comedy can construct and contain alternative models of masculinity and how these relate to racial and national categories of belonging. *Rush Hour*, we argue, is not about the acculturation of ethnic subjects, but about the globalization project. And it is not about the feminization of male subjects, but about the reformulation of the masculine project.

Rush Hour was a surprise hit. Released at an unattractive date in September 1998, it took in more than \$ 30 million in its first weekend. That was not only the most money ever earned for a film during September, it was also the most earned by any film opening in the two adjacent months. Within the next year, the film garnered \$ 141 million in the US alone, making it the seventh grossing movie of 1998.¹ *Rush Hour* became the ultimate breakthrough for Jackie Chan in the US after his first post-Hong Kong success *Rumble in the Bronx* (1995), boosting his career with the sequels *Rush Hour 2* and *3* (due to be released in 2005) as well as with *Shanghai Noon* and *Shanghai Knights*. We argue that this success is largely due to the transgressive nature of the film which, however, never seriously violates the rules of hegemony, in particular, of global neo-liberalism. The film offers two minority characters, playfulness and an all-out camp style, and some highly

entertaining violations of taboos, yet remains a risk-free comedy, never defying any of the constituents of dominant culture. This ambivalence, which is inquired upon in the pages to come, reveals exciting relations of the film's constructions of alternative/deviant masculinities (as performed by the Asian and the African American protagonists) on the one hand and hegemonically established borders such as racial and national divisions and cultural differences on the other.

Asian Masculinity Challenges Western Masculinity

"I am an Oriental. And being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man," says Song Liling in *M. Butterfly*. While American popular culture is indeed notoriously male-centered, the situation appears to be reversed in the case of Asian Americans. The sexual formula which depicts Asian women as ultra feminine sexual objects for white men, says Peter Feng on the occasion of the release of "American Sons," leaves Asian men literally out of the picture. It is this absence of cinematic portrayals of Asian masculinity which corresponds to how Allan Luke describes the "invisibility of Asian male sexuality". While African American masculinity has been iconized as hyper-masculine and violently oversexed ever since the first blaxploitation wave of the 1970s, Asian masculinity in Western discourse is mostly associated with femininity:

Looking in the mirror, we find ourselves without any of the defining characteristics of dominant masculinity - white skin, hairy chests, beards and facial hair, big arms and big muscles. Quite the contrary: we have all the characteristics of something Other, something more feminine in the normative eye of Western sexuality: slender and relatively hairless bodies, differently textured and coloured skin and straight hair. In Western public representations of masculinity we are defined in terms of absence, lack or silence. In this kind of sexual environment, we are invisible - not present, without a place or 'name' in the discourses and practices of white male sexuality (Luke).

Such feminization, which clearly transcends signifiers of the bodily surface, is achieved by both narrative and technical means. Mark Gal-

lagher, who in his compelling analysis "Masculinity in Translation: Jackie Chan's Transcultural Star Text" examines Chan's star *persona* over the course of his prolific and ongoing film career, juxtaposes the body discourse in Hollywood and in Hong Kong action cinema. Hollywood, he asserts, typically features fetish bodies of a white male supremacism that ranges from Johnny Weissmüller to Arnold Schwarzenegger: The hard body of the hero is tantamount to a suit of armor, his gaze is stern, his posture rigid, the movements are brisk, and the language is uncompromising. In comparison, the light-footed body language of many Asian heroes allows for agility and swiftness. Glances are roaming and furtive, postures relaxed, language sometime garrulous. While western heroes pose their beefed-up bare chests, eastern costume ranges from Jackie Chan's sloppy leisure wear to the high-necked Armani suits of the more mundane Hong Kong gangsters. All in all, Chan challenges Western definitions of masculinity in many ways: His physical size is not magnified to mythic proportions by the camera, and his low-key charisma and the burlesque body appear less than ideal to Western standards. He is often put into vulnerable and submissive positions, he is continuously in motion, twisting his body and curling it up. The Hollywood action hero, writes Gallagher, "demonstrates power through a lack of motion, for once in motion, he appears vulnerable, acted-upon rather than active" (27). Flight, a perfectly fine survival strategy for the Asian hero, is the ultimate defeat for American heroes, who always have to "stand their ground". Finally, Chan's multiple, often female opponents, are another major distinction to Hollywood fighting choreography, where the traditional exscription of women from combat scenarios clears the space for homosocial dominance.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of Asian masculinity, however, is that it remind us that men are emotional and compassionate beings - even if they are deadly killers, that is. That Hong Kong hit men experience intimate and romantic sensitivity within male friendship is what Jillian Sandell emphasizes in "Reinventing Masculinity: The Spectacle of Male Intimacy in the Films of John Woo", just as does Julian Stringer in his article "'Your Tender Smiles Give Me Strength': Paradigms of Masculinity in John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*."

row and *The Killer*." That such emotional intensity is attributed to the Asian hero, of which Jackie Chan is but one example, is probably far more provoking to Western masculinity than is the swiftest of body languages.²

The challenge to white masculinity, however, exceeds aspects that can easily be subsumed under femininity. They do so, in part, by genre-mixing. What Jillian Sandell has pointed out regarding the John Woo oeuvre is true of many Hong Kong films, namely that they bridge the gap between "women's" and "men's" genres – in this case mixing romance and melodrama with action and gangster films (25). Thereby, they connect elements that in western film are usually relegated to different genres: nervous energy, manic pace, high speed, and wall-to-wall-violence are coupled with melancholic sadness and loss (Stringer 25). Or, as is the case with Jackie Chan films, acrobatic skills are combined with earnestness and comic timing. Particularly important perhaps is that doing and suffering are not locked into a dichotomy (Stringer 30) and thereby break one – if not *the* – defining aspect of gender, the construction of doer and done, active and passive, perpetrator and victim, all implicitly tied to notions of masculinity and femininity.

Another challenge to masculinity comes from Hong Kong films' focus on relationships, both on-screen and off. Sun Longji maintains that Hong Kong heroes are more characterized by relationships than by existentialism, the hallmark of western heroes: In "The Long March to Man" he makes a number of interesting assertions on how the intercultural transposition of a western film (in his case of a Nouvelle Vague French existential gangster picture) into the 1980s Hong Kong cinema has repercussions for a comparative treatment of western and non-western film masculinities:

In Existentialism, a man [sic] 'exists' by virtue of retreating from all social roles and searching his own soul. If he fails to go through this process, he cannot become a man in the philosophical sense. By contrast, a Chinese fulfills himself within the network of interpersonal relationships. A Chinese is the totality of his social roles. Strip him of his relationships, and there is nothing left. [...] In Chinese, the words

'single' and 'alone' have the connotations of 'immoral' and 'pathetic'" (163).

This cultural difference engenders different audience positions: empathy is fostered rather than distance. We thus suggest that Hong Kong films create a more feminine viewing position than conventional Hollywood fare does, thereby opening up the potential of a more polyvalent gender subjectivity vis-à-vis entertainment film.

Thus, in the adaptation of Hong Kong movie aspects to Hollywood, such as Jackie Chan's "Americanization", the Western stereotype of the Asian man as feminized comes back to haunt Western hegemonic masculinity when an Asian hero is employed. In *Rush Hour*, this challenge is partly muted by normalization – a "whitening" – of the Chan *persona*. Following Foucault, normalization would here mean an upgrading from marginalization. Paul Rabinow, the editor of *The Foucault Reader*, summarizes Foucault's position:

By 'normalization' Foucault means a system of finely gradated and measurable intervals in which individuals can be distributed around a norm. A system of normalization is opposed to a system of law or a system of personal power. There are no fixed pivot points from which to make judgements, to impose will. Normative, *serialized* (to use the Sartrean term) order is an essential component of the regime of bio-power, for 'a power whose task is to take charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanism. [...] Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor. (Rabinow 20).

Arguably, such measuring and (re)appraisal is part of the functioning – and fun – of *Rush Hour*. It reformulates hegemonic attitudes to race and gender and incorporates new elements. "An essential component of technologies of normalization is the key role they play in the systematic creation, classification and control of 'anomalies' in the social body" (Rabinow 21).

Genre Evolution and the Whitening of Jackie Chan

Rush Hour has become famous for expanding a genre. While the buddy film at first featured two white guys as the phallogical protagonists, this formula later came to include the biracial buddy film in which a black and a white character were the – often reluctant (and never symmetrical) – partners. *Rush Hour* was the first successful buddy film that did without a white protagonist. While *Rush Hour* thus advances the genre, the film is, to a certain extent, also bound by the genre's rules.

An essential feature of the biracial buddy movie is that the buddyism itself helps contain the blackness portrayed. As Ed Guerrero points out, "... dominant cinema has been reluctant to cast black leads without a white buddy as cultural and ideological chaperone or without a space or point of identification structured into the diegesis for the dominant spectator" (239). This chaperone effect makes sure that the film is not perceived as a black film, while at the same time "cashing in on black cultural currency" that is well contained within a mainstream construction. Many bi-racial buddy films thus combine an irresponsible black guy with a rational white counterpart. In *Rush Hour*, this structure is both maintained – wild-mouth Tucker is contained by model-minority member Chan – but is also subverted and alleviated through the Black-Asian instead of Black-White pairing. With the help of the Asian chaperone *Rush Hour* then manages to kill two birds with one stone: It provides a sort-of-white chaperone for its black protagonist, and it passes itself off as multiethnic. Thus it is able to cash in on the "cultural currency of blackness" and that of multiethnicity, while also appeasing their respective threats.

Although *Rush Hour* manages to do without a white protagonist, it still participates in the bi-racial buddy film's processes of Othering, in which black characters serve as ink pad for defining the norm through their own non-normative status. White identity is, as numerous theorists and cultural analysts have pointed out, always dependent on a contradistinction to a non-white identity.

[...] Toni Morrison in her study of whiteness in American literature, *Playing in the Dark* (1992), focuses on the centrality, indeed inescapability of black representation to the construction of white identity, a perception shared by the very influential work of Edward Saïd (1978) on the West's construction of an 'Orient' by means of which to make sense of itself (Dyer 13).

Black representation indeed ensures the invisibility and the seemingly endless variety of whiteness in representation: Thus *The Godfather* is perceived as a film about Italians or the Mafia, but not about whiteness - just as *Kramer vs. Kramer* is perceived as a film about fatherhood, not about whiteness. In contrast, films which feature black characters are immediately labeled as being about Blacks, regardless of how general their themes may be (cf. the reception of Spike Lee films).³ Such asymmetrical perception is not restricted to the black-white *representation*, but has occurred numerous times in US history: Whiteness, we must remember, was once restricted to German, English and Scandinavian Europeans, while the Irish, Italians, or Eastern Europeans were not considered purely white. The eventual "integration" of these groups into the white population has happened on the back of people of all other colors, placing these groups in contradistinction.

Thus, in *Rush Hour* the black character serves to normalize, to whiten both the character Lee in the film, and the star *persona* of Jackie Chan. Just as much as Carter is racialized, Lee is deracialized. While Carter has highly dubious connections to the mob, is unprofessional, hysterical, and preposterous, Lee is perfectly honest, self-controlled, and super genteel. Indeed, he is a true top cop who outwits the entire FBI and ultimately catches the crime lord. While Carter is an overacting egomaniac, Lee is devoted to his boss and to his cause. The complementary structure of the buddy formula makes the African American subservient to the task of promoting the Asian into Caucasian and the queer (feminine) man into the "straight man" (pun intended).⁴

However, the polarizing of the racialized Carter versus the deracialized Lee is never absolute: Since there is no white companion for Lee, Carter not only represents Blackness, but also the US. In fact,

Carter's highly individualistic attitude is as American as apple pie. He even ends up going west – although in this comedy, that is the East, of course. Conversely, Lee is not just a white-washed straight man. Like Carter, he is also childish, for example when he quarrels with Carter over who had the better daddy. Also, he is still the foreigner and thereby the Other who makes a number of plunders, particularly connected to his lack of competence in American language and culture. In particular, he needs to overcome his submissiveness in order to be transformed into a proficient, American/global player.

Globalization and Ethnic Semiosis

Ultimately, the two characters represent tendencies that are to be combined for a successful subjectification in global cultural hegemony. Where Lee is too submissive for a western ideology of individual agency, if combined with the "unreasonable" self-opinion of Carter we finally get the balance. In this sense, Lee is not normalized in *contradistinction* to Carter but rather in *connection* with him. This is particularly obvious in the scene when Carter gets Lee out of the plane back to Hong Kong: After Lee and Carter have messed up the first drop of ransom money, the Chinese consul in L.A. sends Lee back to Hong Kong. Whereas Lee bows to this demand, Carter does not give in. He intrudes into the plane right before take-off and convinces Lee to stay on the case.

Lee: "What are you doing here?"

Carter: "Come on Lee. Now get your ass up, now. We got work to do!"

Lee: "Go away. I have disgraced myself! ... Leave me alone. A man like you could never understand!"

Carter: "A man like ME?"

Lee: "You are devoted only to yourself. You are ashamed of being a police officer. You dishonor your father's name!"

Carter: "Look, you don't know nothing about my father."

Lee: "You said your father is a legend."

Carter: "My father WAS a legend. My father was killed making a routine traffic stop in broad daylight by some punk who they want no

ticket. When his partner's supposed to get out of the car to back him up but he never did. My father was just as much devoted as you. And now he's dead. And for what? A traffic ticket for some punk! Now tell me, where's the honor in that?"

Lee: "You believe your father wasted his life? That he died for nothing?"

Carter (slyly): "Prove me wrong!"

What Lee has to learn here is not to follow orders but to listen to his own conscience. That he is so easily convinced by Carter implies a sort of natural seed of American ideology: he actually has always been a "Western" individual at heart that only needed to be awakened. Finally, Lee is not completely whitened, because he retains a number of his keymark characteristics coded as Asian – body language, social behavior, defensive fighting technique, and a refusal to use guns.

The global (transnational and transethnic) character of *Rush Hour* becomes particularly evident through a closer look at its employment of ethnic semiosis, i.e. the production of ethnic signs. These ethnic signs, although usually preexisting in a culture (artifacts, words, etc.), are in their intercultural functioning only defined in the ethnic encounter. For only within the inter-ethnic contact are these signs produced as ethnic, that is, as different signs. As William Boelhower puts it: "[T]he pragmatic and the semantic dimensions of the [cultural] encyclopedia, its situational and conventional versions respectively, are indissolubly united in the activity of the subject, whose ethnic *habitate* is the frame, the spatio-temporal moment of ethnic semiosis" (90). An ethnic sign is a special case of a sign, because its relevancy lies less in its meaning than in its lack of meaning: the defining characteristic of an ethnic, *inter-cultural* sign, in difference to an *intra-cultural* sign, is that it cannot be sufficiently deciphered, that the reader cannot be sure if his or her reading coincides with that within the sign's original culture. There is, therefore, an element of confusion, or at least a splitting of denotations and connotations which defines ethnic signs.

On the surface, *Rush Hour* sports many ethnic signs: Chinese artifacts, Chinese characters, Chinatown, Black bars, Black music,

Black idiom, and above all the racialized ethnicity of the two protagonists. One of the film's priorities is the flaunting of cultural differences between Lee and Carter. However, a closer look reveals that the ethnic signs are muted, décor rather than substance. The antique Chinese vases, for instance, which symbolize China so prominently in the film, and which are so dear to Lee that he repeatedly risks his life for them, have a very limited signification – value and age – and are devoid of any further intra- or inter-ethnic meaning. Other seemingly 'ethnic' signs are equally easy to interpret, or rather, they are incomprehensible to the characters (e.g. Chinese food to Tucker, the use of racial epitaphs to Lee), but not to the spectators. Thus, despite the ethnic veneer, these signs remain readable for a global audience. In fact, *Rush Hour* plays off such lack of knowledge for humorous purposes, to entertain the more knowledgeable spectators. What now is the relevance of this global sameness that is behind a thin veneer of cultural difference? Firstly, that the veil before the homosocial similarity is equally thin. But there is also another way of looking at this: Because of the lack or loss of meaning which characterizes the ethnic sign, silent staring, or a cinematic gaze usually becomes a defining feature of inter-ethnic contact. In *Rush Hour*, this is doubly countered: The loss of meaning is minimal, allowing for multi-ethnic communication beyond the silent staring and an implied viewing position that is not assigned to a white center but rather to globalized knowledge about US culture. In fact, one of the most famous jokes of the film, included in the original trailer, plays on this supposed lack of understanding between different cultures.

Scene at LAX.

Carter (without any word of introduction): "Oh, please tell me you speak English!"

He gets no response.

Carter (very slowly): "I'm de-tec-tive Carter. Do you speak-a any English?"

Lee and the Chinese pilot just look at each other.

Carter (loudly): "Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?"

Later, when it turns out Lee does in fact speak English, Carter chastises him, but

Lee replies: "I din't say I din't. You essum I din't. [...] I'm not responsible for your assumption."

Carter: "You fulla shit, you understand that? You fulla shit."

Lee: "Not being able to speak is not the same as not speaking. You seem as if you like your talk. I like to let people talk who like to talk. It makes it easier to find out how full of shit *they* are."

Carter (confused): "What the hell did you just say?"

In order to enhance this reading of *Rush Hour* against the backdrop of globalization, it is useful to compare these mainstream protagonists to the far more radical global players which inhabit the world of science fiction and science fantasy. When comparative science fiction theorist Istvan Csiscery-Ronay claims that science fiction/fantasy is a predominantly US-American genre - and not an international literary phenomenon - he suggests that science fiction is primarily a vehicle for US-American cultural, economic and political values. The US, Csiscery-Ronay advances, are in fact the first nation which, under the auspices of globalization, poses as post- or non-nation, so that they are the first to establish the rules of the neo-liberal game. Such a demolition of the nation as a precondition for neo-liberal globalization is a central thread in contemporary US-American science fiction, which conceptualizes humankind as one collective/hybrid race in which tribal, ethnic, national or gender affiliation no longer bear meaning with regard to identity. Only by such a totalizing concept, Csiscery-Ronay continues, can the US provide the cultural, economic and political preconditions for a "transgalactic corporate globalization" in which capital flow, production and sales markets as well as the diaspora of the intergalactic *Lumpenproletariat* are no longer confined by geographic-ethnic-gendered territorialization.

This mandate of the global economy which opens up new spaces, advances flexibility and cultural fusion so as to better normalize the great diversity it encounters, allows us to read Chan's whitening as an instance of a globalized body - albeit represented from a western perspective. Kwai-Cheung Lo has pointed out that the Hong Kong body - because of Hong Kong's peculiar post/colonial status

which makes it a part of both of the East and the West – is devoid of the historical, a globalization: "[The Hong Kong] subject is a site of indeterminacy or an ambivalent space to be filled out with different historical contents" (109). With Jackie Chan, we thus face not an Americanization of a foreigner, but an adaptation – perhaps including a further de-ethnification – of an already globalized character. In fact, Jackie Chan developed his media *persona* on the basis of Hong Kong movie characters and in contradistinction to Bruce Lee but, as he claims, mostly inspired by legendary American comedians such as Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd. In *Rush Hour* the word play of his name (Jackie Chan) is reinforced by the character name: Lee is an Asian but also an American name. As the latter, it may even remind us unpleasantly (especially if we think of inspector Lee as the chaperone of African American officer Carter) of General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederate Army in the Civil War. Most clearly, however, the name connotes Bruce Lee, perhaps the most legendary trans-pacific global icon. In *Rush Hour*, therefore, the ethnic aspects of Bruce Lee, Inspector Lee, and Jackie Chan are emptied to the point of mere folklore, just as globalization is narratively simplified to the point of tourism: Inspector Lee leaves the US as soon as his job is done, and takes Carter along for a stint. De-racialization and denationalization, couched in terms of "Americanization," are made to look easy, and even to enhance a feeling of belonging – Chan to Carter: "I'm gonna show you my 'hood'."

Race, Gender and Sexuality

As we have seen, comedy is a wonderful habitat for fooling around with racial, ethnic, and cultural signifiers. While *Rush Hour* nonchalantly does away with the traditional white protagonist and de-racing the Asian protagonist, the issues of race and interracial contact themselves remain highly visible – whether we read the protagonists as Asian/Black or as CaucAsian/Black. As race, like any other category of belonging, is not an autonomous category, we will look at the nexus of race and gender (the masculinity of the two protagonists) and

that of and race and sexuality (the specter of queerness in the protagonists' homosocial setting).

Robyn Wiegman has pointed out that racial difference in film very often serves to hide a masculine sameness. She claims that the clash of racial and ethnic signifiers is usually put center stage, while the underlying sameness, or rather an ideological construction of sameness, i.e. that of masculinity, is kept in the dark. Similarly, Cynthia Fuchs argues that action films present "a narrative continuum which contains initial axes of racial, generational, political, and ethnic difference under a collective performance of extraordinary virility. Again and again, these movies conclude with the partners triumphantly detonating all villains and nearby vehicles" (195). The cultural difference of the *Rush Hour* protagonists – further enhanced by racial markers – does indeed assist the pro-masculinist project of obscuring the more substantial marginalization of women from the plot. The project at work, however, is one that is transformed from an explosive, kick-ass masculinity in the early part of the film into a more gracious, more civil masculinity in the second part; and the masculine sameness is one tainted by marginalization rather than by conventional hegemony.

A related viewpoint to that advanced by Wiegman and Fuchs emphasizes that racial difference in the biracial buddy film safeguards against the homosexual threat. For one of the dilemmas of buddy films is the intimate emotional rapport of the protagonists. While the genre succeeds in excluding women by having one of the male characters occupy a position of femininity, this homosocial construction always hovers dangerously close to homosexuality. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has coined the term 'homosocial', which refers to a phenomenon of male communities poised between homophobia and homosexuality. Male institutions such as traditional military and police units are characterized, she argues, by a structural oscillation between male-to-male closeness on the one side and a severe homosexual panic on the other, which often results in homophobic/homosexual rituals (gay-bashing). Homosociality then refers to a homosexual underpinning of straightness, a homosexuality without sex. This precarious homosocial equilibrium in the buddy film is – to return to our point – very often safe-

guarded by the color line, which makes the couple doubly odd and sex appeal between the buddies implausible, thus saving the mainstream audience from "misreading" the intimate interaction of the two buddies. The delicate balance of the homosocial equilibrium in such a sexy setting is, combined with the homosexual panic, a premium driving force of the buddy film and, in the case of comedy, is relentlessly exploited for humorous purposes.



Image 1: Playing with queerness: Having saved Lee's life, Carter ends up under Lee and gets a little thank-you kiss.



Image 2: Homophobia, but distancing of the spectator: Disgusted, Carter wipes off the kiss.

Arguably, the Asian-Black buddyism of *Rush Hour* also carries some of the resistant meanings that Jennifer DeVere Brody has claimed for *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold*. This film, part of a 1970s series, is an extremely rare case of a female buddy cop picture in which Cleopatra, the legendary blaxploitation heroine, sets out to find her black American 'brothers' who had been kidnapped in a Hong Kong drug deal gone wrong. By today's standards, it is even hard to dream up such a film in which white men are marginalized, white women are demonized, and action 'sheroes' such as the African American Cleopatra and her female Asian partner cop Mi Ling Fong dominate the screen. The political and erotic role playing, Jennifer DeVere Brody remarks, where each of the two women cops plays "the Other", undercuts the Hollywood master/slave-binary of the conventional sidekick formula and allows for a highly interesting queer reading (111). In *Rush Hour*, men have recaptured the scene, yet their positioning in terms of race, gender, and sexuality has also been mobilized. The film progresses from dichotomizing – Lee as controlled, Carter as hysterical – to an acceptance of difference *within* masculinity. Moreover, to the extent that hysterical and macho aspects are still projected onto black masculinity, they are counterpoised by the normalization of Asian masculinity, which is traditionally seen as feminized. Super cop Jackie Chan promotes a sensitive masculinity, or a feminine manhood, if one prefers this terminology. And while such a sensitive masculinity is racialized in the stereotype of the feminine Asian man, it is here, as we have seen, at the same time de-racialized and thus integrated into a state-of-the art global model of masculinity.

Susanne Rieser
University of Vienna

Klaus Rieser
University of Graz

Notes

¹ For box office data on *Rush Hour* compare Gray and the files "Business Data for *Rush Hour* (1998)" and "Top Grossing Movies for 1998 in the USA" on the Internet Movie Database.

² As David Eng has revealed in depth, this has resulted in the western association of Asian men with homosexuality.

³ For a critique of mass-mediated constructions of whiteness compare Dyer or Pfeil.

⁴ Lee's marginal status (he is distrusted and excluded by almost everybody in the film) does not contradict this normalization. He simply is another under-dog, a figure with which whites as well as non-whites are regularly invited to identify with in US cinema.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Bahn-Coblans, Sonja.

Born in Durban, South Africa; had university training in London, Geneva, and Innsbruck; became a teacher and assistant in Departments of Translation, English Studies, and, since 1974, American Studies at the University of Innsbruck; in the course of the years since 1980 specialized in film studies.

Fisher, Robert.

Robert Fisher is Professor of Community Organizing and Director of Urban and Community Studies at the University of Connecticut. His latest book is *Settlement Houses Under Siege: The Struggle to Sustain Community Organizations in New York City*, with Michael Fabricant (Columbia, 2002). Fisher was the Henry Lucy Moses Distinguished Professor at Hunter College (CUNY) in 2000, and has twice been a Fulbright Professor in Austria, at the University of Innsbruck (1986-1988) and the University of Graz (1994).

Freese, Peter.

Prof. Dr. phil. Dr. h. c. Peter Freese, born 1939, studied English/American and German literature at Kiel, Heidelberg and Reading, GB. He held professorships at Kiel and Münster and guest professorships at Leeds, the Claremont Colleges, California, Illinois State University, and Eötvös Lorant University, Budapest. Since 1979 he has been Full Professor of American Studies at the University of Paderborn. He is the author and editor of 48 books and of more than 160 articles on diverse aspects of American culture.

Grabher, Gudrun.

Gudrun M. Grabher is Professor and Head of the American Studies Department at the University of Innsbruck. Her main fields of interest are American poetry, American literature and philosophy, literature and the other arts, women's studies, cultural anthropology, Canadian literature, and, more recently, American music. Among her publications are: *Emily Dickinson: Das transzendente Ich* (1981) and *Das lyrische Du: Du-Vergessenheit und Möglichkeiten der Du-*

Bestimmung in der amerikanischen Dichtung (1989). She has also (co)edited, among others, *The Emily Dickinson Handbook* (1998), *Geburt und Tod im Kunstvergleich* (1995) and *Semantics of Silences in Linguistics and Literature* (1996).

Hölbling, Walter.

Walter W. Hölbling is professor of American Studies at the American Studies Department at Karl-Franzens-University in Graz, Austria. Among the books he published and edited are *Fiktionen vom Krieg im neueren amerikanischen Roman* [*Fictions of War in Recent American Novels*] (1987), *Utopian Thought in American Literature* (1988), *The European Emigrant Experience in the U. S. A.* (1992), *U. S. Documentary Films on World War II and Vietnam* (1993). He has also published articles on postmodernist, regional and immigrant writing, literature in the information society, segregationist politics in North Carolina in the reconstruction period, and issues of multi-culturalism and post-colonialism in the contemporary U. S. A. Currently he is working on a study of Austrian refugee publishers in the U.S.A. and co-editing a critical anthology on concepts of 'nature' in the U.S.A. He also writes verse in English and German and, together with a friend, has recently published a volume of poetry in English titled *Love Lust Loss*.

Kern, Louis.

Louis J. Kern is a cultural/intellectual historian, whose work is broadly inter-disciplinary, encompassing the fields of American literature, cinema, and popular culture. His primary interests lie in the areas of the culture of the body and the history of sexuality. He is currently working on projects centering on the culture of eugenics in the U.S. from 1850 to 1950, and radical sexuality and free-love in the Victorian era - especially as manifested in the Kiatone Community of John Murray Spear (1853). Under the auspices of the Fulbright program, he has served as Distinguished Professor of Cultural Studies at the Karl-Franzens Universität, Graz, and is currently Chair of the History Department at Hofstra University.

Kraus, Elisabeth.

Elisabeth Kraus is Assistant Professor at the Institute for American Studies at Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz. She completed her M.A. degrees in Classical Philology (Latin, Greek) and English at the University of Graz and holds an M.A. in English from Claremont Graduate University, California. In her Ph.D. thesis she analyzed the aesthetics of the American writer John Hawkes. In recent years she has shifted her focus in research to the techno-imaginary – to utopian and dystopian reactions in science fiction literature and film to the powerful (nano-)technologies of bioengineering, prosthetic man-machine interfaces, and artificial intelligence.

Lauter, Paul.

Paul Lauter is Professor of Literature at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. He has served as President of the American Studies Association (of the United States), and he is General Editor of the groundbreaking *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. Lauter's most recent books include *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park* (Duke, 2001), a volume with Ann Fitzgerald titled *Literature, Class, and Culture* (Longmans, 2001), and a recently-published edition of Thoreau's *Walden and Civil Disobedience* in the New Riverside series (for which he serves as general editor).

Maierhofer, Roberta.

Roberta Maierhofer is Assistant Professor at the University of Graz, Austria, and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Binghamton University, New York. She wrote her dissertation on William H. Gass, and has taught and published on writers of the 1930s, documentary film, American culture in the 1980s, and on various aspects of women and aging in American literature and culture. In 1998, she received the Paul Petry Award for Age Studies. Her recent book on *Salty Old Women: An Anocritical Approach to Gender, Age and Identity in American Literature* appeared in 2003.

Malmgren, Carl.

Carl Malmgren teaches twentieth-century fiction and literary theory at the University of New Orleans. He has written three books - *Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel* (1985); *Worlds Apart: Narratology of Science Fiction* (1991); and *Anatomy of Murder: Mystery, Detective, and Crime Fiction* (2001) - and numerous articles on modern fiction and narrative theory.

Ostendorf, Bernd.

Berndt Ostendorf, Professor of North American Cultural History at the Amerika Institut, University of München, Germany, has published *Black Literature in White America* (1982); *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* 2 Vol. (1992) and *Die multikulturelle Gesellschaft: Modell Amerika?* (1995). *Transnational America. The Fading of Borders in the Western Hemisphere* (2002) Areas of interest include the cultural history of immigration; the politics of (ethnic) difference, multiculturalism and public culture; creolization and circumatlantic diasporas; American popular culture and the culture industry; New Orleans and Louisiana. Recent articles: "Creolization and Creoles. The Concepts and their History"; "Subversive Reeducation? Jazz as a liberating force in Germany and Europe:" "The Politics of Ethnic Difference: Multicultural Theories and Practice in Comparative U.S.-German Perspectives"; "Why is American popular culture so popular? A view from Europe." "Americanization and Anti-Americanism in the Age of Globalization."

Rieser, Klaus.

Klaus Rieser-Wohlfarter is Assistant Professor at the Department of American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. His major areas of teaching and research comprise US film, gender, multiethnicity and cultural studies. His dissertation on the representation and the metaphorical functions of immigration in film, *Passagen zum Ende des Regenbogens: Ethno-Amerikanische Pidgin- und Interkulturen im Migrationsfilm*, has been published by Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier in 1996. He also co-wrote (with Susanne Rieser) the book *Daughter Rite (1978) und Daughters of Chaos (1980): Filmanalysen*.

(Trier: WVT, 1996) and has published a number of articles. In the last couple of years he has been conducting research on masculinity in film for a book-length study under the working title of *Borderlines and Passages: Difference and Transformation of Film Masculinities*. He has recently served as president of the Austrian Association of American Studies and has organized the 2003 conference "US Icons and Iconicity".

Rieser, Susanne.

Susanne Rieser works and publishes in the field of film, media and Gender studies and teaches at the Universities of Vienna and Graz. She is currently doing post-doctoral research on the topic of "Action-film. The Politics of the Spectacle," with special reference to Hollywood, Hong Kong and Japanese Action Cinema.

Schatzki, Theodore.

Theodore Schatzki is professor in and chair of the department of philosophy at the University of Kentucky. In the spring of 2001 he was the inaugural Fulbright-Karl Franzens University Chair of Cultural Studies. Among his books are *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* (1996) and *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Exploration of the Constitution of Social Life and Change* (2002).

Scheer-Schäzler, Brigitte.

O.Univ.Prof. am Institut für Amerikastudien an der Universität Innsbruck. Dr. phil. Wien 1964. Habilitation für Neuere englische Literatur und Amerikanistik an der Univ. Salzburg 1972. Professor am Institut für Anglistik, Univ. Regensburg 1973. Dekanin der Geisteswissenschaftlichen Fakultät d. U. Innsbruck 1977 – 79. Diverse Forschungsaufenthalte und Gastprofessuren in den USA (Princeton, Rutgers, UCSD, Boston U., U. of Oregon) und der VR China (Beijing U., Sichuan U.) Neuere Publikationen über moderne und zeitgenössische US Literatur, bes. ethnische Minderheiten und Immigranten.

Tally, Justine.

Justine Tally is Professor of American Studies at the University of La Laguna, where she specializes in African American Literature. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the Collegium for African American Research, and an editor for the FORECAAST series (Forum for European Contributions in African American Studies). Her publications include *Paradise Reconsidered: Toni Morrison's (Hi)stories and Truths* (1999) and *The Story of Jazz: Toni Morrison's Dialogic Imagination* (2001). She is currently researching a new book on Morrison's *Beloved*.

Thompson, James.

James Thompson is a professor of American Literature and Culture at Ohio University. He has taught American Studies and lectured in Europe on a number of occasions, including three Fulbright appointments. Among other publications, he has written two books on English Romantic poets and co-authored books on the American novelists John Irving and E. L. Doctorow. His most recent essay is "Richard Ford's *Rock Springs*, Annie Proulx's *Close Range* and 'A Certain Place': Two Western States of Mind," in *Hommage A Yves Le Pellec*, Gerard Cordesse and Jean-Paul Debax eds. (Universite de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2002).

Waller, Hanna.

Hanna Waller teaches American Studies at the University of Salzburg. She has published essays on Alice Walker, Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. Du Bois, Pauline Hopkins, Dorothy Parker, and others in her main field of interest, African American Studies and Women's Studies. She is co-editor of *Daughters of Restlessness: Women's Literature at the End of the Millennium*. She is currently completing a book-length study of the life and literature of the African American writer and journalist Pauline E. Hopkins (1859-1930).

Zacharasiewicz, Waldemar.

Waldemar Zacharasiewicz has been a Professor of American Literature at the University of Vienna since 1974. He is the author of four books, among them *Die Erzählkunst des amerikanischen Südens* and *Das Deutschlandbild in der amerikanischen Literatur*. He has also edited five collections of essays and co-edited another five. His main fields of interest are the literature of the American South, imagology and the use of national stereotypes in literature, travel literature and Canadian fiction.

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Themenbereiche, „Atlantische Perspektiven Europas“, „Globale Perspektiven Amerikas“ und „Hemisphärische Perspektiven innerhalb der Amerikas“, werden ansatzweise sondiert, wobei die jeweiligen Ermittlungen, in der Mehrzahl anhand konkreter Textanalysen, etwa Zeit- und Raumkonfigurationen in europäischer sowie nord- und südamerikanischer Perspektivik, medien- und filmspezifische Diskurse im US-amerikanischen Blickregime oder, im Rückblick auf Herman Melvilles Erzählung „Benito Cereno“, das panamerikanische Imaginäre erkunden und verorten. Dabei erweisen sich Bilder und Selbstbilder immer wieder als Rollen-, Klischee- und Trugbilder und können in der Folge als Mittel in einem Aufklärungsprozess verwendet werden, der vor allem und insbesondere jedwede hegemoniale Weltsicht der USA, wie sie nicht nur in verbalen und nonverbalen Entwürfen und Konstrukten disseminiert wird, sondern zusehends für sämtliche Belange der politischen, wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Praxis maßgebend ist, radikal in Frage stellt.

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